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On set and undead with Daryl, Rick and the savage new season



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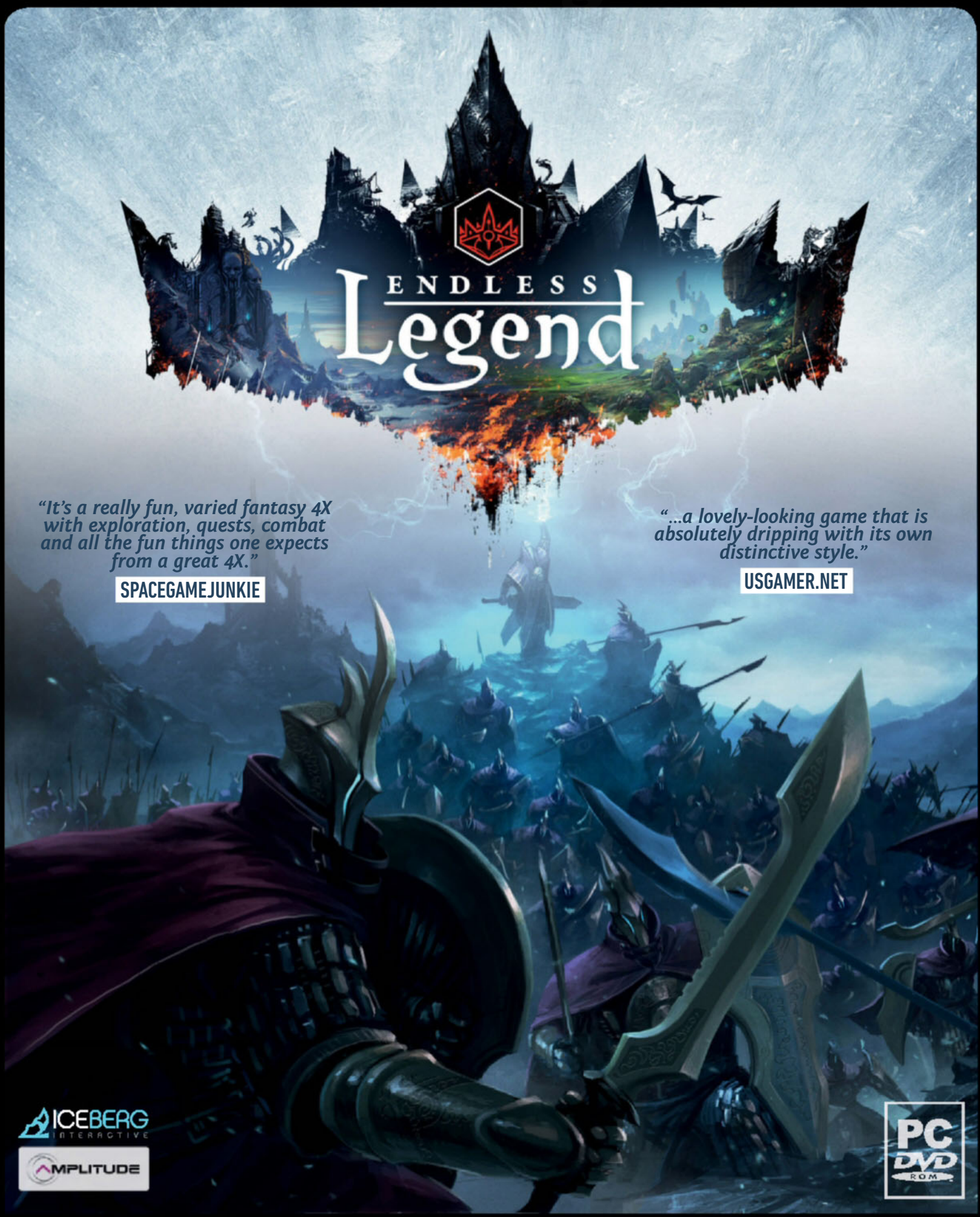
HELLO, PRETTY-PRETTY

SEX QUEEN OF THE GALAXY

Why Barbarella is still sci-fi's kinkiest classic

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Love of *Star Wars* is religious; once you accept the saga into your heart, it never really goes away.

The context doesn't matter – no matter how dowdy the tie-in, the hum of an igniting lightsaber or the aggressive ping of blaster fire makes your skin prickle with anticipation, and the roar of John Williams' main theme will take your head off.

Love of *Star Wars* means subjecting yourself to some right tat at times: it means the prequel trilogy, books about zombie stormtroopers and videogames that overturn continuity so they can be presented as The Definitive New Addition To *Star Wars* Canon.

In religious terms, you have been tested; subject to contradictory and awkwardly compromised dogma to untangle and the lunatic proclamations of false prophets. At the heart of it all is something pure; the messages and characters you fell in love with as an eight-year old.

Star Wars: Rebels feels fresh and exciting, old and familiar all at the same time. It echoes the simplicity of *A New Hope*: Outer Rim rogues and scoundrels, mysterious loners blowing the dust off a weapon from a more civilised age, and a towering, black-clad enemy whose mere breath is chilling.

Yet, the Super Star Destroyer-sized bulk of *Star Wars: Episode VII* looming overhead can't be ignored; something new is coming. *Rebels* isn't stirring up leftovers in the hope of finding undigested chunks like *The Clone Wars*, *Ewoks* and *Droids*; it's the start of something that will define a decade. It could be the Second Coming, or the Apocalypse. Either way, it's a big deal.

This issue also sees new acolyte join our order, as staff writer Poppy-Jay Palmer takes the sacred oath. Her incredible passion and attention to detail infuses every page she touches. We're very lucky to have her, and you guys are too.

James

James Hoare
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY - PART 1

Rebellion is now more than one girl's refusal to compromise as Panem reels from Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence)'s destruction of the Hunger Games and the challenge to the leery President Snow (Donald Sutherland). As Gale Hawthorne (Liam Hemsworth), Effie Trinket (Elizabeth Banks) and Cressida (Natalie Dormer) join the fight. Katniss and Finnick Odair (Sam Claflin)'s escape came at the expense of those closest to them, with Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson) among those caught in the Capitol's grip.

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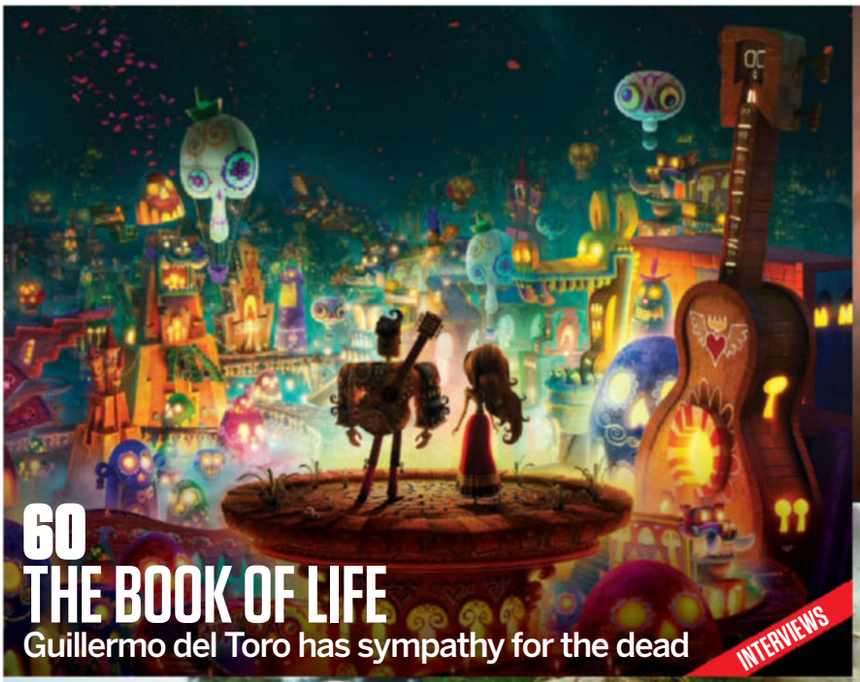
CONTENTS

EVERY ISSUE

08 PORTAL
What's happening in the world of sci-fi

88 SUBSCRIPTIONS
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130 NEXT ISSUE
Your first look at the next issue of SciFiNow



60 THE BOOK OF LIFE
Guillermo del Toro has sympathy for the dead
INTERVIEWS



50 THE WALKING DEAD
Taking on Terminus
ON SET



46 HORNS
Radcliffe reveals his demons



08 THE HOBBIT 3
Bye bye Bilbo



28 THE MAZE RUNNER
Massive exclusive



34 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
Director speaks out



122 BARBARELLA



118 AT THE EARTH'S CORE

PORTAL

08 The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies
As Smaug descends on Laketown, we count down to the trilogy closer.

13 Shazam!
Dwayne Johnson limbers up as DC's Black Adam.

15 Interstellar
We mine Christopher Nolan's upcoming space adventurer for nods to Stanley Kubrick.

17 Birdman
Michael Keaton loses it in this clip collection for Alejandro González Iñárritu's fifth feature.

FEATURES

20 Star Wars: Rebels
The show's creators on heralding *Star Wars*' exciting new era.

28 Supernatural
Jensen Ackles and Jared Padalecki on surviving death and beyond to reach a tenth season.

34 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Why Michael Bay's update does justice to your childhood memories.

40 The Maze Runner
The young leads of the latest YA hit on why this isn't just another Hunger Games.

46 Horns
Daniel Radcliffe on how he outgrew Harry Potter to become the star of this devilish Joe Hill adaptation.

50 The Walking Dead
We return to Terminus to chat with the survivors of AMC's unstoppable juggernaut ahead of Season Five.

56 Zombie Movies
Our pick of the sub-genre, from *Dawn Of The Dead* and *Shaun Of The Dead* to *Pontypool*.

60 The Book Of Life
Director Jorge R Gutierrez and producer Guillermo del Toro on how they cooked up this authentic ode to Mexican culture.

REVIEWS

68 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Bay brings back the Turtles – but does he do them justice?

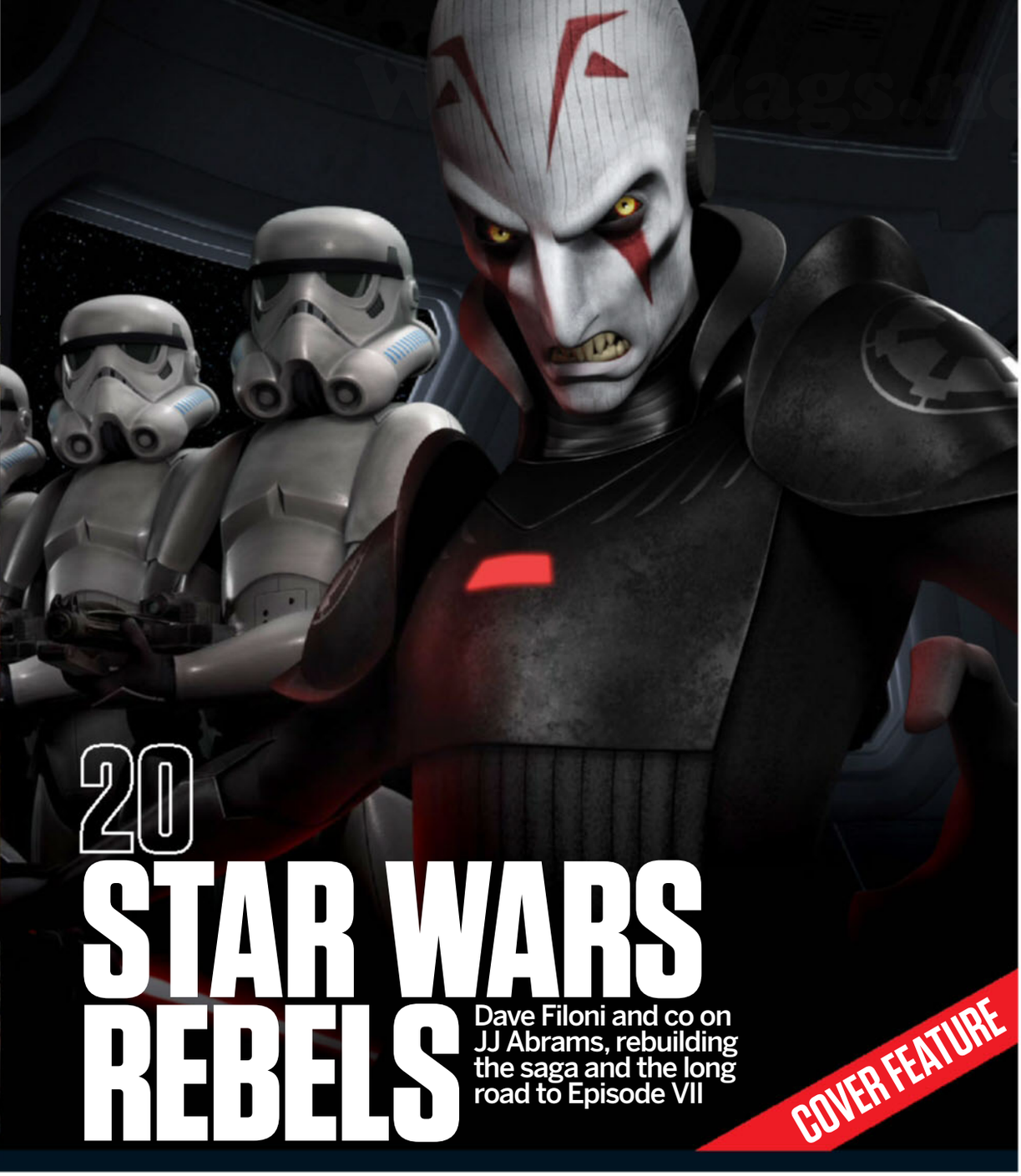
69 What We Do In The Shadows
We sink our teeth into this vampire comedy from *Flight Of The Conchords*' creators.

69 Electric Boogaloo
This star-studded documentary tells us how Cannon Films took on Hollywood.

70 The Giver
Lois Lowry's novel hits the big screen, but is it worth the wait?

70 The Maze Runner
Does this find its way or get lost in the labyrinth?

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20 STAR WARS REBELS

Dave Filoni and co on JJ Abrams, rebuilding the saga and the long road to Episode VII

COVER FEATURE



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MEET THE TEAM

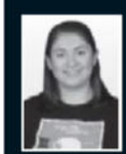
Q. Which character would you most like to see in Star Wars Rebels?



James Hoare Editor
A. Mother Talzin
What becomes of the Nightsisters under the Empire?



Jonathan Hatfull
Senior Staff Writer
A. Admiral Ackbar
Young Ackbar, constantly moaning about traps everywhere.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Staff Writer
A. Jar Jar Binks
I don't care what people say – he's adorable and I want to adopt him.



Steve Wright
Production Editor
A. Quinlan Vos
His fate's been left pretty open, so it'd be cool to see him turn up.



Marcus Faint
Senior Designer
A. Jabba the Hutt
I want to see him sat there in all his wobbly splendour.

71 Lucy
Can Luc Besson luck out with *Lucy*?

72 Frightfest 2014
From *The Guest* to *Dead Snow 2*, our pick of the UK's essential event for horror-hounds.

80 Hannibal
TV's most twisted bromance continues in the second part of this *Silence Of The Lambs* adap.

80 Doctor Who: Deep Breath
Our verdict on the feature-length first episode of the Peter Capaldi era.

82 The Walking Dead: Season Two
Telltale's much-applauded handheld puzzler gets collected in this second instalment.

BOOK CLUB

92 Essential Read: American Gods
How Neil Gaiman wowed fans and proved his versatility with this genre-mashing hit.

96 Beginner's Guide: Angela Carter
From *The Bloody Chamber* to beyond, how Carter left her mark on genre fiction.

98 The Iron Trial
Is Cassandra Clare and Holly Black's team-up something to write home about?

106 Kelley Armstrong
We chat to the creator of the *Women Of The Otherworld* series about her latest novel, *Visions*.

TIMEWARP

110 Studio Ghibli
With head honcho Hayao Miyazaki retired and its future uncertain, we chart the studio's rich history.

118 At The Earth's Core
Hear the story of the film that was the third *Dr Who* (sic) movie in all but name.

122 Barbarella
How this Jane Fonda-starring slice of erotica became a cult classic.

126 Quiz: Lost
Return to the Island and find out whether you're a survivor or an other.



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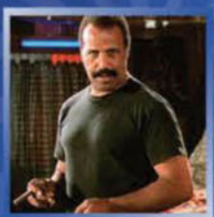
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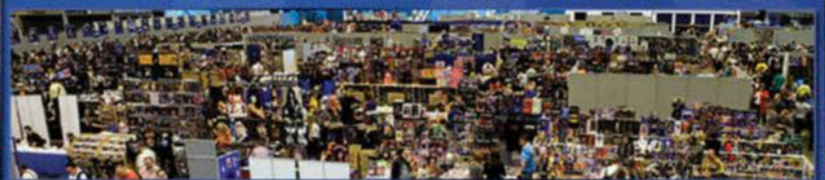
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MC GAINEY — LOST, CON AIR

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Portal

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"THERE'S A LOT OF SADNESS AND TRAGEDY"
PETER JACKSON

The Battle Of The Five Armies **will kick off right where** ***The Desolation Of Smaug*** **finished.**

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011 LIFE AFTER BETH



Aubrey Plaza on her much buzzed zombie rom-com

012 ADVENTURE TIME



We get a look at the art of TV's most trippy yet terrific show

013 WITCHES OF EAST END



Star Mädchen Amick on being wicked and loving it



Ian McKellen returns to play Gandalf for the sixth time.



Luke Evans and Orlando Bloom reprise their roles of Bard and Legolas respectively.

RING WORLD

THE HOBBIT GOES TO WAR

Peter Jackson and Martin Freeman talk Battle Of The Five Armies

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

The world is behind, and home is hopefully ahead for Bilbo Baggins. The last in the trilogy, *The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies*, will be out in December, and then that's it; they are all done. Unless Peter Jackson shows up at the premiere with a script for a *Silmarillion* movie, there'll be no more Middle-Earth films ever again, or for a very long time at least. We're kind of sad about it.

The Hobbit started as a two-part story, but in 2012 it was confirmed that it would become a trilogy, owing to the amount of footage shot. "It's extended the way you would imagine it would extend seeing the first two. It's a progression" said Jackson, speaking at San Diego Comic-Con. "There's a lot of sadness and tragedy, which is good. It's always great when you can kill off some main characters… We do get to kill a few this time around."

The extended series left room for Bilbo to develop. He may not always seem it, what with the all the wizards and dwarves, but he is the protagonist of the story (the clue's in the name). The last 330 minutes have seen him go from a pocket handkerchief-wearing do-nothing to a burglar extraordinaire who would readily beat up a giant forest spider just because it dared to touch his bling. He still gets a little wobbly when faced with, say, a dragon, but really he's come a long way, both figuratively and literally.

Martin Freeman agrees that Bilbo has developed a lot since the Shire. "He's still the same person he was – not a fighter or adventurer by nature – but he finds bravery that he didn't know he had and, more importantly, that none of the others knew he had," he said. "It's a huge change for him to be among a different species that wants to kill him or eat him."

This brings us to where we left off in *The Desolation Of Smaug*. Bilbo, Thorin and company attempted to take back Erebor from the mighty dragon Smaug, but it all went pear-shaped. Now, Thorin is feeling particularly vengeful and Smaug is very ticked off.

The Battle Of The Five Armies looks like it's going to be a good one from the trailer. Jackson abandoned the egg-throwing and sing-alongs back in *An Unexpected Journey*, and what was left is darkness and death. *The Hobbit* is beginning to take a detour back to the Shire through sombre *Lord Of The Rings* territory. "It's not as comical as the first *Hobbit* movie," said Jackson. "They're progressively getting to the tone of *Fellowship Of The Ring*."

More *LOTR* was unearthed in the trailer's soundtrack. Over the images of war and destruction rang Billy Boyd's dulcet tones singing Pippin's haunting *The Edge Of Night* à la *Return Of The King*. Some fans saw it as emotional blackmail on Jackson's part, toying with their emotions and loyalty to Middle-Earth, while others found it charming, and a perfect way of tying everything together in the face of the final chapter.

There's still time for *The Battle Of The Five Armies* to butcher the rest of the trilogy, but it's unlikely. Peter Jackson's track records with both battles *and* armies have been pretty good so far, and if the end of *TBOTFA* is anything like the end of *Return Of The King* then we are in for a treat.

The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies is in cinemas 12 December.

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TRIVIA IAN HOLM AND CHRISTOPHER LEE'S SCENES WERE FILMED IN LONDON RATHER THAN NEW ZEALAND.

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HANNIBAL: THE BROMANCE IS OVER

Mads Mikkelsen dishes on Hannibal: Season Three, and why he'll miss Hugh Dancy

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

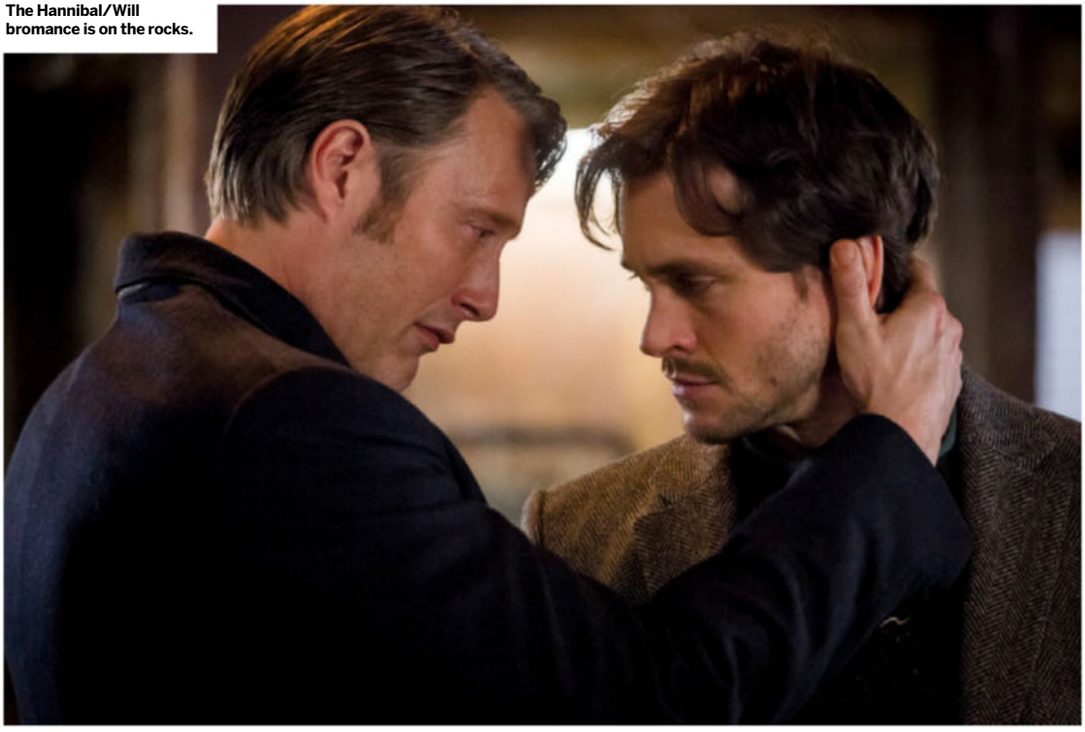
Hannibal's second season ended on a cliffhanger that can only be described as brutal. The masks were off as Hannibal Lecter (Mads Mikkelsen) left Will Graham (Hugh Dancy), Alana Bloom (Caroline Dhavernas), Jack Crawford (Laurence Fishburne) and Abigail Hobbs (Kacey Rohl) broken and bleeding as he strolled off into the night, so we're pleased it's got a third season. "Yes, it's nice!" laughs Mikkelsen. "We're all just waiting to see where this is going. We are as curious as you guys."

One thing is for sure: the Hannibal/Will bromance is over. We'll no longer get to spend time with the characters as they pick each other's psyches apart, and Mikkelsen says he'll miss spending time with his co-star. "Yeah I am, absolutely," he tells us. "I was just thinking about it the other day, hopefully we will have something. I don't know whether it will be flashforwards, flashbacks or something. I enjoyed working with Hugh tremendously, we spent at least 50 per cent of our time together, and that's a friendship that I'm going to miss, but hopefully is going to be there somehow."

He'll have a new companion, however – at least for a while, as we saw Hannibal sharing a drink with Gillian Anderson's Bedelia Du Maurier. With a plan to reportedly set Season Three in Florence and draw from the novel named after him, there's plenty of scope to see Hannibal cause havoc. "Bryan has not told me anything yet, but if he had, I would not be allowed to say anything! My hunch is that I'm on the run, and that will be fun. It's not like Hannibal's going to be a different person; he's still what he is, but he's in a different environment, and every time he's in a different environment he's slightly different, I guess."

One of the second season's highlights was Michael Pitt's performance as the repulsive Mason Verger, and Mikkelsen has his fingers crossed for a quick return. "I think it was beautiful," he remembers. "In the films we only see Mason after his face is ripped off, now we've got to see at least three or four episodes with him before, and I think that was a fantastic gift. First of all, to have the character in there and be what he is, secondly, of course, having Michael Pitt doing it will never be a quiet experience – we just capture what he is doing, and I think it was a rare treat for the audience, and for us as well, and hopefully we're going to see more of him in the next season."

Hannibal: Season Two is available to buy now on DVD and Blu-ray.



The Hannibal/Will bromance is on the rocks.



©2014DC Comics

RA'S AL GHUL GETS WHITEWASHED... AGAIN

Arrow Season Three casts classic Batman villain Ra's al Ghul and courts controversy

After teasing the infamous immortal master of the League of Assassins for the bulk of *Arrow* Season Two, Oliver Queen actor Stephen Amell took to Twitter to reveal the new face behind Ra's al Ghul.

Aussie rugby player turned actor Matt Nable, who starred in *Riddick* and Australian crime drama *Underbelly*, will appear in episode four of the new series, titled 'The Magician'.

While he's no doubt a fine actor, this is the second time that the Seventies Batman foe has been whitewashed, with Liam Neeson taking on the role in Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins*.

In the comics, Ra's al Ghul is depicted as being Middle Eastern (his name is Arabic) and as one of the few multi-faceted Middle Eastern characters in comics, it's not an auspicious start to this new incarnation to rob him of that.

If it's born out of not wanting to stereotype Middle-Eastern characters as terrorists then that's understandable, but Ra's al Ghul is one of the few opportunities the DC canon offers to make a character much more than something from Frank Miller's paranoid nightmares.

Here's the bottom line: denying Arabs, Persians and everyone else from the rich cultural, religious and ethnic tapestry that is the Middle-East their visibility will not magically solve the problem of racism for you.

Arrow returns to Sky 1 this October.

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FIVE THINGS WITH

AUBREY PLAZA

The Parks & Recreation icon on Life After Beth, She-Hulk and filming with an oven on her back

WORDS MATTHEW TURNER



© Rex features

1 Life After Rec

When you're one of the stars of a hit TV show, you have to pick your movie projects carefully. Fortunately, *Parks & Recreation*'s Aubrey Plaza says the script for zombie comedy *Life After Beth* was one of the best she'd ever read. "I just loved the dialogue so much, and I thought the idea of a movie that was really emotional and kind of about a relationship, but also had this zombie element, was really smart and unique. I loved the idea of playing a character that's not alive; that's dead the entire time and that goes through different stages of deterioration, and I thought it would be physically really fun. Actually, the most challenging part was the trajectory of my zombie-ness, because we didn't shoot chronologically, so it was a little bit hard to remember: 'OK, in this scene, I'm a stage three zombie, so I'm not totally insane, but I'm still a little bit crazy.'"

2 Do it DeHaan way

Hiking is a pivotal part of the story in *Life After Beth*, so what better way to get to know co-star Dane DeHaan? "We met right before we started shooting, and we actually went hiking in Griffith Park and just got to know each other, talked about our relationship as the characters. I really like him – he's a really good actor. I was a big fan of his, and he looks like a young Leonardo DiCaprio, so I'm like, 'I'm in – I would *love* to work with him.' He's very quiet, actually – a very private person. I think people think that he is serious, because he doesn't smile or give it up to people that much. But he's definitely really silly. If you get to know him, he's not serious at all. He's, like, a little piece of shit."

3 Worst backpack ever

In a film full of delightfully absurd moments, perhaps the weirdest involves Plaza's zombie character wearing an oven on her back. "It was totally fucked up, because it was really heavy, and at first, when I first tried to lift it up, I tore my abdominal muscles and I hurt myself. And then they built this harness for the oven that I then used when I carried it up the mountain. But the prop was like half a real oven and half a fake oven, so it had a heaviness to it, so it was hard, but it was fun."

4 Aubrey Plaza is... She-Hulk?

Much as *Ginger Snaps* posited werewolf-ism as a metaphor for female sexuality, *Life After Beth* has a lot of fun equating zombie-ism with rage issues. "[Director Jeff Baena] told me his idea of what a zombie is – like the basic, primal, human brain or something, where you have basic intense urges, so that's what I was playing with. I don't often get to use my demonic energy deep down inside me and have fun with that in parts, so it was really fun for me." In fact, Plaza's natural affinity for rage suggest she'd be perfect casting for a certain green-skinned superhero, should the opportunity arise. "She-Hulk? Oh my god, I would love to be She-Hulk. Because I had super-strength? Yes, I want to be She-Hulk. Write that movie and I'll do it. I would love to be any kind of superhero or person with super-strength."

5 Life after Life After Beth

Apart from zom-coms and the seventh and final season of *Parks & Recreation*, what else can we look forward to, Plaza-wise? "I have another movie coming out called *About Alex*, which is more of a drama – it's like a reimagining of *The Big Chill*. And I did a Hal Hartley movie that's the third movie in the *Henry Fool* trilogy, called *Ned Rifle*. I'm really excited about that movie." And is that balance of comedy and more offbeat projects part of the plan? "It would be great, if that was my career, if I could keep doing great comedy parts and then also work with really great filmmakers. That's kind of my dream, I guess. I just really like movies, and I like filmmakers that have a really distinct voice."

Life After Beth is in cinemas 3 October.

OH MY GOD, I WOULD LOVE TO BE SHE-HULK. WRITE THAT MOVIE AND I'LL DO IT

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PRISONERS OF LOVE
"Love is not crystal clear all the time," said art director and supervising producer Nick Jennings

TROUBLE IN LUMPY SPACE
"When I was painting these cards I was addicted to breakfast burritos," explained artist Paul Linsley.

RICARDIO
"Ricardio made me feel uncomfortable," explained Linsley.

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

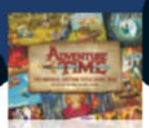
OH MY GLOB

Feast your eyes on the incredible title cards of Adventure Time

Fans of the Cartoon Network series *Adventure Time* will tell you that each episode is a beautifully crafted piece of perfection from beginning to end. A key part of that is the fantastic title cards that introduce each episode, recalling everything from classic monster movies to *The Fabulous Baker Boys*.

One of the great joys of *Adventure Time* is in its ability to hop from tone to tone and reference to reference, appealing to viewers of all ages. This collection of the show's title cards allows us to revisit each of these painstakingly designed and undeniably awesome creations, with preliminary sketches and input from the artists themselves.

So whether it's the slightly sinister shadows of 'Memories Of Boom Boom Mountain', the luxurious gothica of 'Henchman' or the unbridled epicness of 'His Hero', this book will send you hurrying back to Netflix to relive what has to be one of the best cartoons currently airing.



Adventure Time: The Original Cartoon Title Cards is available in hardback now from Titan Books.

WorldMags.net



SOMETHING WICKED...

WITCHES OF EAST END SEASON TWO

Mädchen Amick on why the supernatural show will only get crazier

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Witches Of East End went from strength to strength in its first season, blending solid domestic family drama as the Beauchamps struggled with their personal lives, and good old-fashioned supernatural weirdness, as the witches became part of an escalating conflict that ended on one hell of a cliffhanger.

Star Mädchen Amick tells us that we can count on one thing: things aren't going to slow down. "Oh yeah! In fact, it gets even crazier!" she laughs. "They absolutely push the envelope on what kind of concepts can you come up with."

Amick plays the wild Aunt Wendy, who was forced to take things a little slower when she suddenly found herself with one life, which is a bit of a sharp change from nine. "It's definitely raised the stakes," she tells us. "Every time she puts herself in harm's way to help protect the family, she's basically offering herself up as a sacrifice! And it's made her look at life a lot differently, and her relationships and her love life." Speaking of which, Amick teases that "There's a lot of really good naughtiness, and there's also just a good old-fashioned love story as well."

Witches Of East End is another example of a growing number of shows focused on female characters, giving actresses like Amick and Julia Ormond the chance to shine. "It's about damn time!" she laughs. "To see some really good, strong female characters, and to see that it's successful and it's not just a female viewership. It's amazing, and we have to pay attention and keep making more stories like that – not have it just be a wave."

Witches Of East End airs Mondays at 10pm on Lifetime.

TOP 3 EMERGING BAD-ASSES

More heroines to look out for this season



Agent Isabelle Hartly (Lucy Lawless) Agents Of SHIELD
If you're looking for someone to give your show a shot in the arm and kick a little ass then look no further than Lucy Lawless.



Jenny Mills (Lyndie Greenwood) Sleepy Hollow
Abby's sister became one of the first season's biggest scene-stealers, and has been promoted to series regular for Season Two.



Agent Carter (Hayley Atwell) Agent Carter
Her badass-dom was confirmed on the big screen with *Captain America: The First Avenger*, but we can't wait to see Atwell bring her brilliant Peggy Carter to TV.



©EvaRinaldi

SHAZAM! THE ROCK IS BLACK ADAM

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson finally reveals his DC role

After teasing us with a mystery superhero project for what seems like a (rock of) eternity, Dwayne Johnson has announced that he'll be playing Black Adam in DC's *Shazam*, tweeting, "Kneel at his feet or get crushed by his boot. My honor to become #BlackAdam #TheAntiHero #DCComics."

Original a straight-cut villain in the DC universe, Black Adam was retconned by current DC chief creative officer Geoff Johns into a more morally complex antihero, a blood and thunder Superman of the Ancient World effectively.

In development at Warner's New Line subsidiary, this suggests a certain distance from Zack Snyder's *Justice League* universe and New Line head honcho Toby Emmerich told *Entertainment Weekly* that the movie "will have a sense of fun and a sense of humour. But the stakes have to be real." He also used Johnson's character in the *Fast And Furious* franchise as a point of comparison, in which his Agent Hobbs lives on the other side of the law from the high-speed heroes, but will unite with them against a greater threat.

With a writer already attached (*Jack The Giant Slayer* and *Shrek Ever After*'s Darren Lemke), *Shazam* is moving full steam ahead, and we'll be keeping our eyes peeled to see just how different this is going to be. Fingers crossed for a bit of light in the darkness.



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Just how geeky are our favourite sci-fi stars?

GEEK-O-METER

STEPHANIE LEONIDAS

70 TOTAL GEEK RATING

GEEK CRED

Stephanie Leonidas is currently starring as sci-fi western *Defiance*'s resident volatile Irathient Irisa, and she tells us that playing her has been an absolute joy. "I think what's always attracted me about Irisa was that there is so much depth to her character," she enthuses. "There is so much to play with and so much history behind who she is, and I think that's what sci-fi does so well: bring up these issues and storylines that people can relate to and reflect back."

16/20

GEEK KNOWLEDGE

When it comes to fantasy fandom, Leonidas tells us that it wasn't until she started working on *Defiance* that she realised how involved she was. "I like things like *The Dark Crystal*, I grew up with all of that stuff, and I didn't realise how much stuff I watch in that genre and enjoy," she tells us. "But more so now that I'm involved in it, it's opened my eyes to so many more shows. You're quite liberated in what you do, and I think that's important."

10/20

COMMITMENT

If you're going to play an alien on a show on Syfy, the chances are that you're going to have to wear some prosthetics. "I think some days are harder than others, at 3am they can be tough!" laughs Leonidas. "But it's a funny process because I don't feel like Irisa until it's all complete, and I feel like I couldn't play her without looking that way, you know? It's one of those things that you know you're not going to do on very many projects, so I kind of embrace it."

14/20

FAN POWER

Defiance has to be one of the most cos-played series currently airing. "There's been quite a few Irisas," she tells us. "Every time I've gone to a convention I've spotted a few... they're getting so good at their costumes! A lot of the Irisas have come up and spoken about deeper stuff as well, their relationships with their fathers and troubles that Irisa has kind of helped through some of that, so it's nice that *Defiance* has touched people in that way as well."

15/20

SPACE WESTERN

The show centres on lawkeepers, and Irisa and her adopted father Nolan (Grant Bowler) have the badges. "You do get that western feel," enthuses Leonidas. "The way they push the doors open into the lawkeepers' office always makes me smile!" However, Season Two will make things harder for the duo. "I'd love to say that she was back singing Johnny Cash with Nolan, but I'm afraid that isn't the case. Peace isn't in her vocabulary this year, I'm afraid!"

15/20

Defiance Season Two airs Thursdays at 9pm on Syfy.

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SLAM IN THE BACK OF MY KICKSTARTER

Rob Zombie tells SciFiNow why you should fund his latest horror

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

When it comes to crowd-funding movies, it seems only right that the filmmaker asking for our help should make something that they would never be allowed to create within the studio system. When Rob Zombie decided to take that route to fund his latest horror film *31*, he tells us that pushing the limits was essential.

"That's the goal, because if not, what's the point?" the director of *The Devil's Rejects* tells us. "The horror genre seems to go in waves, and right now what seems to be missing is just really dirty, nasty, gritty stuff, which has never been the most commercially viable."

So *31* will find the director sinking his teeth into some particularly dirty, nasty and gritty subject matter for a Halloween-set movie that throws the viewer into a full-throttle nightmare. "It was about people going missing on Halloween, I was curious if that was a day of the year when people go missing, and it's huge. It's the story of five different people on the five days leading up to Halloween and their abduction, and then they all find themselves together at this place called Murderworld, where they have to fight for 12 hours to stay alive."

When it comes to the fans reaching into their pockets to fund the movie, Zombie admits he had reservations. "I never wanted to seem like, 'Oh, we're crowd-funding, give us money,'" he explains. "But I thought if we could set it up in a way where everybody was getting something worth the value of the money they were contributing, then really what it was becoming was a store to help fund the movie, like you sell T-shirts at concerts. I was trying to put them in my place; if I had in any way donated to *Dawn Of The Dead* and somehow my name was in the credits that would be like the greatest thing in the world to me when I was a kid."

More information on *31* is available at the film's FanBacked page.

INTERSTELLAR: JUST HOW KUBRICK IS IT?

Charting the master's influence on the latest Interstellar trailer



2/5

The American pastime
A dust cloud interrupts a baseball game, which shows an Americana that Kubrick was never particularly interested in putting on film.



1/5

Father and daughter
The love between parents and their children was never a big element of Kubrick's films, but looks to be key to *Interstellar*.



4/5

The vastness of space
Ah, here we go. Marvel at the journey into the infinite. We'd still say that this looks more like Ridley Scott's *Alien*, but we're getting there.



5/5

Into the infinite
Definitely a big Kubrickian influence here, as a bubble encircles the spaceship and – to be honest, we don't know what's happening...



3/5

Video call from home
Cooper's daughter makes a video call to her dad. We could point out that it looks like the video call that Heywood Floyd makes in *2001*, but it looks like there are a lot more feels here.

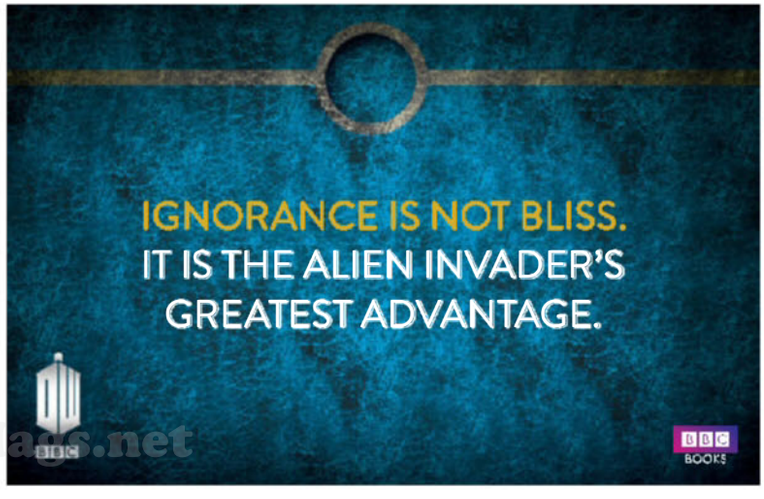


2/5

Feeling the weight
After shots of harsh landscapes and our astronaut heroes, Cooper breaks down at the end of this teaser. It looks like Nolan's trying to blend Kubrick's visuals with a beating heart.

VERDICT: 3/5 MOSTLY KUBRICK

Interstellar will be released in cinemas on 7 November.



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TROUBLE IN THE OUTBACK

HUNTING SEASON

John Jarratt talks bringing back boogeyman Mick Taylor for Wolf Creek 2

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**
INTERVIEW **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

It's been a long wait, but the sequel to Greg McLean's Australian horror sensation *Wolf Creek* is finally here, and John Jarratt tells us that a second outing with Mick Taylor was always on the cards.

"We always thought that we'd be good for a sequel," the actor remembers. "Horror films lend themselves to that – the monster lives... It just seemed like the right thing to do; to reprise it."

Wolf Creek 2 brings the focus onto Mick as he tracks his prey. Amiable with a twisted sense of humour and a predilection for murder and mutilation, Mick is an unforgettable creation, and Jarratt tells us that he had no problem getting back into character.

"It was a lot easier this time around, because I knew the character worked and that people loved the character, as he's become such an icon now," he explains. "I kind of lived with him in that period because I was involved in the script and was part of the *Wolf Creek* team, so I slipped into Mick Taylor fairly quickly this time round."

While the first film was very much a suspense film – a tribute to the slow-burning thrillers of the Eighties – *Wolf Creek 2* takes a different approach. Here, McLean's influences are more varied, with the blood-and-guts horror sitting alongside stunning car chases.

"We needed a plan of difference to get the excitement up," enthuses Jarratt. "There's no point in repeating the same thing... you couldn't anyway, because the first one kept the monster in the cage until halfway through, so it's a waste of time doing that, because we know who the monster is from the get-go now. The point of difference is we made it more of a chase film at the beginning, and that makes it more of an action thriller for the first part. Then we get down to it"

More time with Mick means more opportunity for Jarratt to develop his terrifying take on the character. "Oh, of course, if you took out the evil he'd be a great bloke to have a beer with!" he laughs. "The character is an impersonation of my father, although he wasn't evil and didn't kill anyone. My Dad was a very likeable, funny – a precarious larrikin, which I think Mick is. However, he's got this psychopathic, evil side to him, which is unnerving. But apart from that, you'd enjoy a night in his company, I reckon!"

When it comes to a third outing for Mick's unusual Outback tours, Jarratt is convinced that it's a given. "Yeah, the only reason we probably won't shoot a third is if *Wolf Creek 2* tanked, but I can't see that happening, so most probably another sequel, yeah."

Wolf Creek 2 is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.



THE WOLF OF WOLF CREEK

Charting the career of splat-pack director Greg McLean

WOLF CREEK (2005)

McLean arrives with a bang via this gruelling, low-budget horror-thriller, a gruesome cut above the then-burgeoning 'torture porn' schlock.



ROGUE (2007)

An entertaining creature feature with a bigger budget and cast (including Radha Mitchell and Sam Worthington), but suffers in comparison to *Black Water*.



RED HILL (2010)

With *Wolf Creek 2* already being mooted, McLean produced this lean thriller, starring Ryan Kwanten as a gun-shy, small-town cop facing a vengeful returning psycho.



WOLF CREEK 2 (2014)

After delays due to funding falling apart at the last minute, McLean's sequel proves to be great fun, making the sensible decision to tell a different kind of story.



6 MIRANDA DRIVE (2015)

McLean joins the growing ranks of Blumhouse filmmakers with this promising ghost story, starring Kevin Bacon and *Rogue*'s Radha Mitchell.



JUNGLE (2015)

From the Outback to the Bolivian rainforest, this next film will see McLean tell the tale of three backpacking friends who get lost in the jungle.



Kevin Bacon image © David Shankbone

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LEARNING TO FLY

BATMAN RETURNS... SORT OF

Start getting excited about Birdman

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

It's been a good long while since we've seen Michael Keaton get into a superhero costume, but the man who's still (in our opinion) the best on-screen Batman is getting back in the saddle... sort of.

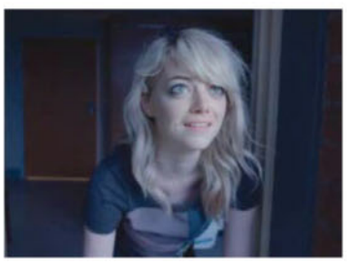
He's the star of *Birdman*, the new darkly comic drama from the brilliant Alejandro González Iñárritu, the director of *21 Grams* and *Amores Perros*. The movie tells the story of Riggan Thomson (Keaton), an actor who is still best known for playing the superhero Birdman years ago, and is trying to revive his career by writing, directing and starring in a Broadway play that has some upsetting parallels with his real life. But as opening night approaches, Riggan's psyche begins to splinter.

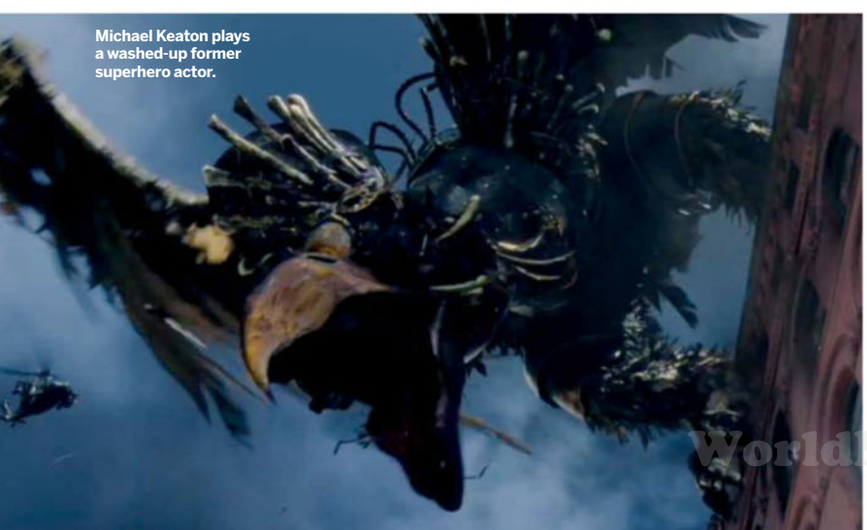
When it came to casting the role, Keaton was the perfect choice. "I sent him the script," González Iñárritu told *Variety*. "He read it. We went to dinner – I was afraid – and he said, 'Alejandro, are you making fun of me?' I said, 'Not at all. This is a very difficult film to play, because it has to be played with such honesty, and I'm going to do it, technically, in a way that's going to demand a lot of shit from you.'"

The soul-searching and heart-breaking journey that Riggan is sent on is given another dimension, as González Iñárritu mirrors the theatre stage with the stage of life, shooting the film to give the illusion of a single take without cuts. "The thing about Alejandro is he's got guts; huge, big, big balls; intelligence; unrivalled passion; and he's enormously creative," Keaton explained to *Variety*. "He gave me a tremendous opportunity to do the very type of thing that is really what I got into this profession for in the first place. You don't often get a chance to work with someone who has all those qualities. And he's nuts! He's totally fucking nuts! But he's my kind of nut."

With a supporting cast that includes fellow superhero veterans Edward Norton and Emma Stone, along with Naomi Watts and Andrea Riseborough, *Birdman* looks set to feature heavily on a lot of end of year 'Best Film' lists, and to continue the long-overdue Keaton comeback. To quote Birdman himself, "That's what I'm talking about."

Birdman is in cinemas 2 January 2015.





Michael Keaton plays a washed-up former superhero actor.

100 ALL-TIME GREATEST COMICS

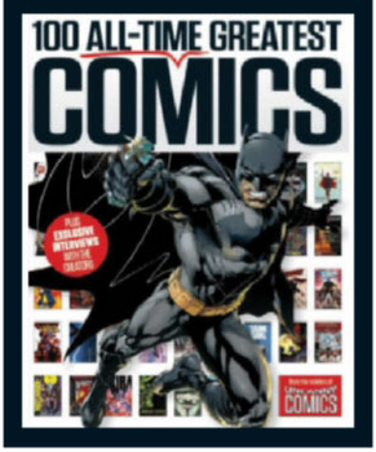
Your essential guide to the best comics ever made is here

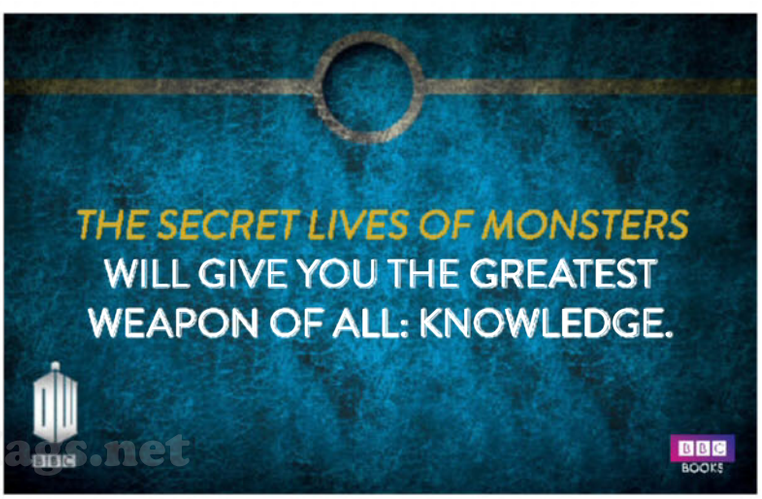
From the makers of SciFiNow and Uncanny Comics comes 100 All-Time Greatest Comics; your essential guide to the best comics ever written and the people who made them happen. From Xavier's Mansion to the Daily Planet offices, and the Dreaming to Spider Jerusalem's filthy apartment, this will send you running to your bookshelf to dig out your old favourites and sprinting to your local comic store to find new ones.

We chart *Batman* from *Year One* and *The Dark Knight Returns* to Grant Morrison's *Batman & Robin*; assess the most radical Vertigo titles from *Preacher* to *Y: The Last Man*; shine a light on under-appreciated titles like *The Airtight Garage* and *Why Are You Doing This?* and hail the new generation with *Young Avengers*. It's also loaded with exclusive interviews with the very best writers and artists, from Alan Moore and Chris Claremont to Brian K Vaughan and Kieron Gillen.

So whether you're a lifelong reader or are looking to dive into the world of graphic novels, this is the guide that you can't do without.

100 All-Time Greatest Comics is out now.





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HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



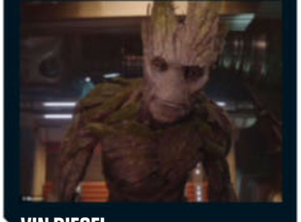
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COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



BATMAN (MICHAEL KEATON)

COSPLAYER: PAUL WARE **FROM:** CAINE, WILTSHIRE **PHOTO:** RED CHAIR PHOTOGRAPHY **FACEBOOK:** /HEROWARES

1 THE CHARACTER

"Batman for me is maybe the greatest fictional character ever created. I'm nearing 40, and simply could not imagine my life without him. There is no doubt that he has made a significant impact on my life.

"I still consider Tim Burton's 1989 *Batman* movie to be the best adaptation of Batman on film. No other *Batman* movie has quite captured the spirit of the comic-books, and Michael Keaton's fantastic portrayal has yet to be surpassed; he is utterly sublime."

2 THE ARMOUR

"While I sculpt an awful lot myself, I was lucky enough for the 1989 Batman costume to have moulded a screen-used suit. However, the casts I got from that needed a massive amount of restoration before I could re-mould them in fibreglass and fabricate them into wearable costume parts from polyurethane rubber."

3 THE COWL

"Exactly the same process. Polyurethane rubber for this use is usually sold in two-part liquid form. The two liquids are mixed together in equal measure; a tint can then be added (in this case, black).

"The liquid rubber is then poured or brushed into a mould in layers until a suitable level of thickness is achieved. Then it's a case of waiting until a chemical reaction causes the rubber to solidify, or 'cure'.

"I am completely self-taught in those skills, and have over ten years of experience. I am currently planning to create a series of YouTube tutorials for anyone out there who would possibly like to have a go themselves."

4 THE DETAILS

"The gloves are leather, as are the boots. The undersuit to which the armour sections are glued is made of a stretch pleather, the cape is latex and the emblem and belt buckle are resin."

5 THE COMFORT

"It's not the most comfortable to wear, and after a few hours it can be downright painful. Mr Keaton has my sympathy – I now know what he had to go through. It has helped me perfect my 'Bat-turn', though."

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TRIVIA MICHAEL KEATON WAS UNABLE TO HEAR ANYTHING WHILE WEARING THE BAT-COSTUME IN *BATMAN*.

AN UNDERCOVER LOOK AT THE MOST WANTED DOCTOR WHO MONSTERS IN THE UNIVERSE



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IT IS A PERIOD OF CIVIL WAR...

STAR WARS: EPISODE VII BEGINS NOT WITH THE FATE OF LUKE, HAN AND LEIA, BUT WITH ALL-NEW ANIMATED SERIES STAR WARS REBELS. WE FIND OUT FROM CREATORS DAVE FILONI, KILIAN PLUNKETT AND KEITH KELLOGG WHY WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE A NEW HOPE IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT FOLLOWS RETURN OF THE JEDI...

WORDS BARTOSZ CZARTORYSKI



IT MAY BE SET A LONG TIME AGO, BUT THE FUTURE OF THE GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY IS UNCERTAIN.

The old order of George Lucas has fallen, and Lucasfilm, now in the hands of Disney, is powering up a whole new trilogy, starting with JJ Abrams' *Star Wars: Episode VII* in December 2015 and followed by Rian Johnson (*Looper*)'s *Episode VIII* in 2017 and *Episode IX* (with a story treatment from Johnson) in 2019, with a salvo of spin-offs to plug the gaps. Rumoured subjects include Yoda, Boba Fett and Han Solo, but the only certainties are that Gareth Edwards (*Godzilla*) and Josh Trank (*Chronicle*) will helm at least one each.

Set 30 years after 1983's *Return Of The Jedi*, this new saga will pass the torch to a whole new core cast, but for every new face is an old one. Rising stars like John Boyega, Adam Driver and Lupita Nyong'o are side-by-side with Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher, while new creators like Abrams, Johnson and Edwards have creative titans like *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi* screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan at their side.

It's not just that this is 'new *Star Wars*' like the prequel trilogy was 'new *Star Wars*' – new films, TV shows and a sense of energy – it's 'new *Star Wars*' in that unexplored frontier beyond the Battle of Endor and without the watchful eye of original creator Lucas. Or unexplored save the Expanded Universe at least, which has been junked so the new era has limitless space to explore and newcomers aren't suddenly thrown into Wookieepedia without water wings.

But the first signs of 'new *Star Wars*' won't be the *Episode VII* teaser trailerl it's *Star Wars Rebels*, a new Disney animated series starring an all-new cast of rebel scum and set in the dark days between ▷

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> WE LOOKED UP TO HAYAO MIYAZAKI, AND TRIED TO BLEND THIS KIND OF SENSIBILITY WITH RALPH'S MCQUARRIE'S BACKGROUNDS
> KILIAN PLUNKETT

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Revenge Of The Sith and *A New Hope*. Like the upcoming movies, it combines new faces with old hands – in this case Dave Filoni, the supervising director of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* – and like *Episode VII*, it has us sure-footed and on the back foot all at once.

In short, anything could happen, and the repercussions could be felt not just in the next episode, but in *Star Wars: Episode VII* when it finally hits cinema screens with the skin-prickling roar of John Williams.

"People always get excited when they are going to work with *Star Wars*. If you're given that opportunity you sit down and think, 'What am I going to do? What story will I tell?' says Filoni.

"I guess sometimes you discuss with your friends what you'd do if you had any influence on the *Star Wars* universe," he continues, "and we do the same, but turn it into the real stuff. It's fun and frightening at the same time. It's going to show up, so be careful what you wish for! You know ahead of time that you'll do something cataclysmic to the fans."

It may be 'cataclysmic' for *Star Wars*, taking us away from the characters we've grown intimately familiar with throughout assorted movies, books, comics and cartoons, but *Rebels* promises to stay true to the original trilogy. But what does that mean if not the rise and fall of the Skywalker clan?

"A sense of inspiration and hope. That's why people come back to this universe. Things can get dark, but in the end they always come out hopeful. Believing in something is greater than your selfishness," answers Filoni.

"Even Luke doesn't win unless he throws down his weapon in front of the most evil person in the galaxy and says, metaphorically, 'I love you, father, no matter what you did'. It's a selfless act. Han also undergoes a transition. For Leia, he does what he never did before; he doesn't turn his back and run away. Back there in '77, nobody expected that."

NOW, WE EXPECT PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING. AFTER 37 YEARS, THE MYSTERIES OF THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE HAVE HARDENED INTO CANON – the Expanded Universe may have been replaced by the optional 'Legends' banner, but there are still six films (and two animated series) underpinning everything they do.

"Oh, we are going back toward the originals," assures Keith Kellogg, animation supervisor on the new series. Like Filoni, he cut his teeth on the much-loved *The Clone Wars*.

"We are closer to the original trilogy timeline-wise, and that's why it's closer to the original trilogy visually," adds Kilian Plunkett, art director and another *Clone Wars* veteran, whose relationship



Series creator Dave Filoni is enthusiastic about *Rebels*' prospects.



WANTED

EZRA BRIDGER

FOR THEFT, SUSPECTED FORCE USE

Born and raised (by himself) in the Outer Rim, Ezra is a teenage scoundrel who knows his craft. A master thief and cunning pickpocket, he has no idea that the Force is strong with him. Dave Filoni compares him to a young Indiana Jones and, er, *Titanic*'s Jack Dawson.

IF SEEN REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU



WANTED

ZEB ORRELIOS

FOR ASSAULT, RESISTING ARREST

Ever wondered what a clean-shaven Chewbacca would look like? Well, here you are. He's the Ghost's resident muscle, nagger and grumpy older brother. You can't live with him, and you can't live without him.

IF SEEN REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU



WANTED

KANAN JARRUS

FOR VIOLATION OF ORDER 66

This renegade Jedi and rebel leader boldly goes where no Jedi has gone before – to the heart of the Empire. It may seem at first like he traded his lightsaber for a blaster, but he still manages to kick ass cowboy style.

IF SEEN REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU

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> KANAN JARRUS REMINDS ME OF JUDD NELSON IN THE BREAKFAST CLUB
> DAVE FILONI

Renegade former Jedi Padawan Kanan Jarrus will be voiced by Freddy Prinze Jr.





with *Star Wars* stretches right back to Dark Horse's *Star Wars: Droids* and *Shadows Of The Empire* comic-books.

"There is a huge amount of fun and interesting stuff from the prequels that we incorporate," Plunkett continues, "and there are some things that we'll use for sure in the future. Remember these pink energy ribbons that hold pod's engines together? It is a vital part of *Star Wars*' visual language, and we'll certainly be using that."

Looking back even further is CG effects supervisor Joel Aron (who worked on not just *The Clone Wars*, but *Revenge Of The Sith*): "I watch [Akira] Kurosawa films a lot and try to get my daughter into them, but subtitles are just a pain. Anyway, he is a huge, huge influence for me from a cinematographic point of view to the visual feel you are constantly getting."

George Lucas, who co-produced the Japanese master's 1980 epic *Kagemusha*, never stopped using Kurosawa's trademark wipe, and fell in love with *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) so much that he redesigned two bedraggled peasants that are vital for the story as C-3PO and R2-D2. The classic filmmaker's best-known movie, *Seven Samurai* (1954), was even explicitly homaged in an episode of *The Clone Wars* dedicated to him – 2010's 'Bounty Hunters'.



WANTED

HERA SYNDULLA

FOR AGITATION, ILLEGAL STARSHIP MODS

The captain of the spaceship Ghost. She acts as the mother to the crew, but is definitely no Theresa. By shades beautiful and lethal, she is the glue that holds this particularly atypical family together.

IF SEEN REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU



WANTED

CHOPPER

FOR UNSAFE WIRING

A C1-10P-type droid made of spare parts. He couldn't care less if you like him or not, as he is the only one who understands how Ghost works, which ultimately makes him pretty much indispensable.

IF SEEN REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU



WANTED

SABINE WREN

FOR VANDALISM, SABOTAGE

A redhead with a Mandalorian helmet may seem like a wet dream for a certain kind of hardcore *Star Wars* fan, but she's no damsel in distress. She's proficient with all sorts of weapons and types of combat.

IF SEEN REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU

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"Actually, we looked up to Hayao Miyazaki, and tried to blend this kind of sensibility with Ralph McQuarrie's backgrounds," adds Plunkett, throwing another element into the mosaic.

The McQuarrie influences are perhaps the most fascinating – and for long-term fans, touching – aspect of *Star Wars: Rebels*. His original 1975 concept art for the movie comprises some of the most iconic *Star Wars* images never actually seen in *Star Wars*, but here they'll finally get an airing. Most prominently is main character Zeb Orrelios, who is drawn straight from the hairless original sketch for Chewbacca, and he fulfils a similar role in the show – getting up close and personal to bash a few gleaming white helmets together. The locations also feel the late artist's brushstrokes, as Lothal, the rural Outer Rim setting for *Rebels*, is inspired by the plains in some of McQuarrie's depictions of Alderaan, dominated by similar ant-hill rock formations.

It seems that the only vaults they haven't looked into are the LucasArts archives (the division was practically dissolved after being acquired by Disney, and now serves only as a licensor rather than a developer), where games that today's 30-somethings grew up with gather dust.

"One exception will be the Inquisitor's lightsaber," says Kellogg. "He barely shows up in the first episode, but still... we had different ideas about his lightsaber, and we used some abandoned concept art from *The Force Unleashed*."

Although no one will talk about *Episode VII*, the Inquisitor (voiced by Jason Isaacs) and his soon-to-be iconic double-bladed spinning lightsaber, is rumoured to be the main villain in JJ Abrams' blockbuster. Darth Maul may have finally found a worthy successor. Regardless of its veracity, it's a testament to how much emphasis – legitimacy, even – is being placed on the show, despite ostensibly being aimed at children on the high-octane Disney XD channel.

This is definitely a different galaxy from the quasi-official 'subject to change' status of *The Clone Wars*, and Filoni is well aware of the significance of *Rebels* in the overarching masterplan.

"I wouldn't say 'Expanded Universe'; we are just continuing the story we were working on as a company for many years," he says, emphasising the distinction.

"Of course, there is an EU that exists in novels, games and comics, but they were created without an oversight of George Lucas. There is also some stuff that never found completion, like the TV series he had been working on. And that's what I refer to as a canon. Of course, we still use aspects of the EU as inspiration, but it's nothing more than a pool of ideas to draw from, and we have been working this way for a long time now. *Rebels* represents the beginning of a new era for us, and it's a privilege to be first out of the door."

When news of the EU's decanonisation broke, fans may have overreacted; the stories still exist, and it's clear that this wealth of material will be dipped into for *Star Wars: Rebels* – as well as the new trilogy – much as Lucas did when he incorporated Coruscant (first mentioned in Timothy Zahn's *Thrawn* trilogy novels) into canon and Special Edition-ed Dash Rendar's Outrider (from *Shadows Of The Empire*) and Imperial swoop bikes into *Return Of The Jedi*.

THERE'S ALREADY PLENTY TO GIVE DIE-HARDS HOPE THAT MARA JADE MIGHT EVENTUALLY MAKE THE CUT, RACES SUCH AS THE LASAT AND Devaronians, which both appear in the show, were first named in the EU, while organisations such as the Imperial Security Bureau, Kuat Drive Yards and Corellian Engineering Corporation either feature or are namechecked in the back story. It's an awesome responsibility, but it's one that Filoni and his team have clearly earned.

"If you're new to it, you try to do what you saw before. That's what I did on *The Clone Wars*. You repeat lots of things and it's fine. But I learnt from George that the best parts of *The Clone Wars*, and paradoxically the parts closest to the classic trilogy, are those when we tried to do something radically new and create new characters, and we didn't rely on what came before. You have to live in this world," explains Filoni.



Ghost captain Hera Syndulla will be voiced by Vanessa Marshall.



The show starts with the introduction of the young Ezra Bridger (Taylor Gray).



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NOBODY EXPECTS THE IMPERIAL INQUISITION

Rebels' big bad looks like a deadly mixture of many of the Dark Side foes we've faced before...



FACE YOUR FEARS

We've not seen any Pau'an Force users on screen before, but the Inquisitor's pallid skin and face tattoos echo *The Clone Wars'* Asajj Ventress. It's impossible to not talk about facial tattoos without mentioning Darth Maul either...

80% ASAJJ VENTRESS
20% DARTH MAUL

CLOAK AND DAGGER

The intimidating black armour obviously echoes Vader, while the elegance of the design has more in common with Dooku's regal, er, quilting. The armoured neck, meanwhile, is similar to the original concept art for Asajj Ventress.

40% DARTH VADER
30% COUNT DOOKU
20% ASAJJ VENTRESS

A WEAPON FOR A LESS CIVILISED AGE

The Inquisitor's double-bladed lightsaber draws obvious parallels with Darth Maul, but the spinning special move echoes the windmilling-in-the-playground fighting style of General Grievous.

60% DARTH MAUL
40% GENERAL GRIEVOUS

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MARVEL DO IT REALLY WELL, BUT THEIR COMIC LINE DOESN'T NECESSARY MATCH UP WITH WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE FILMS – OUR FANS CAN THINK OF THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE AS A COHERENT WHOLE
DAVE FILONI

While *Rebels* does create a new world inside a universe with fewer borders and do-not-cross lines than the old EU, there's still the sense of familiarity that prevents the whole franchise from coming apart at the seams.

"You know *Star Wars* is successful if you can take away all the lightsabers, TIE fighters etc, and can say this is a story about a family and be able to put that family anywhere, and it still works. You cannot rely on *Star Wars* lore."

In *Rebels*, the rag-tag team comprise familiar – familial, even – archetypes. They are scrappers, swindlers, thieves, ex-Jedi and Jedi-to-be – as far from the knights, soldiers and politicos of the prequels as you can get.

"Kanan's got a lot of bravado for a Jedi. He's got that Han Solo thing, gun on the hip, and it's all very different from what you usually see in a Jedi. He's using a blaster!" explains Filoni of the show's adult lead.

"The two big questions are what kind of Jedi is he, and what does he know? He is reluctant to accept his role as a Jedi. It's not a popular thing to walk around with a lightsaber; it's like holding a big target sign. He's a cowboy Jedi; there is some coolness about him. He reminds me of Judd Nelson in *The Breakfast Club*."

Kanan Jarrus (voiced by Freddie Prinze Jr) and Ezra Bridger (Taylor Gray) – the youngest member of the team, whose entry into the Rebellion provides the audience's POV – may be Outer Rim outsiders with an improvised master/Padawan dynamic, but their relationship is nothing like Luke and Obi-Wan's.

"Everybody wanted to have this story about a kid who learns how to use the Force," he continues. "*Rebels* follows a new group of characters we created from scratch, and didn't have to worry about sticking to already set personalities," adds Kellogg.

Joining Ezra, Kanan and the aforementioned muscle Zeb (voiced by Steven Blum) are Twi'lek pilot Hera Syndulla (Vanessa Marshall), Mandalorian hellraiser Sabine Wren (Tiya Sircar) and aggro astromech droid Chopper. A neat echo of the original trilogy line-up (albeit it with double the women), they're similarly hunkered down in a Corellian freighter that has a few surprises up its sleeve: the Ghost.

Opposing them are of, course, the massed ranks of Imperial Stormtroopers, Scout Troopers, Imperial Navy, AT-STs, AT-ATs, Star Destroyers and no doubt much worse, but at their head is the Inquisitor, a looming and ghostly Dark Side user tasked with hunting down the Jedi, and the uncompromising Agent Kallus (David Oyelowo).

Also confirmed to be popping up are Lando Calrissian and C-3PO, voiced by original stars Billy Dee Williams and Anthony Daniels, and Obi-Wan Kenobi – whether as a hologram or in person is unknown – voiced by his *Clone Wars* actor James Arnold Taylor.

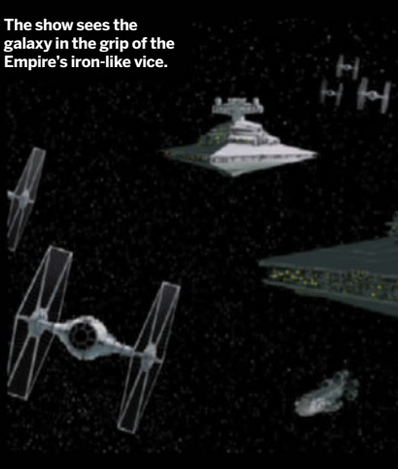
"George always wanted us to think big," says Aron, reflecting on the lessons of *The Clone Wars*, "like it was designed for a big screen, and we tuned up to that. This time on *Rebels*, time and money are much shorter, and we are moving much faster."

It's happening fast, but that doesn't mean it's a cynical tie-in. Without the Expanded Universe giving almost everything a fixed hierarchy to shelter under regardless of quality and consistency, *Rebels* has to *matter*. It's the first post-Lucas era product that fans will dissect for clues as to what shape *Episode VII* will take.

And they're right to look. After all, now we're discounting reams of supplements stretching back to the West End Games RPG, covering everything from the complex histories of various planets and species to how weapons and vehicles work, *Rebels* has a lot of ground to expand upon.

"How do they get into a TIE Fighter?" asks Filoni, as an example. "In the blueprints they got into the back of





The show sees the galaxy in the grip of the Empire's iron-like vice.



Zeb – based on the original design for Chewbacca – is personified by prolific voice actor Steve Blum.



The spaceship Ghost places *Rebels* firmly in the space-western tradition of shows like *Firefly*.

MANY BOTHANS DIED TO BRING US THIS INFORMATION...

Major Star Wars releases to look out for over the next six years

BOOK FILM VIDEOGAME COMIC TV SERIES

STAR WARS REBELS: SPARK OF REBELLION
3 October 2014
The feature-length episode kicks off the new animated series from the team behind *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. You might have heard of it...

STAR WARS: TARKIN
4 November 2014
James Luceno shades in the background of *A New Hope*'s most evil foe, a man who uses genocide to make a point and commands Darth Vader like a pet dog.

STAR WARS
TBC January 2015
The first of the new Marvel ongoing series teams up writer Jason Aaron (*Scalped*) with artist John Cassaday (*Astonishing X-Men*), and takes place after *A New Hope*.

STAR WARS: HEIR TO THE JEDI
17 February 2015
Kevin Hearne takes us behind the fringe of Luke Skywalker to explore how the dustbowl farmboy became a rugged Rebel commander.

STAR WARS: DARTH VADER
TBC Febraury 2015
Kieron Gillen (*Phonogram*) and Salvador Larroca (*X-Men*)'s ongoing series picks up with Vader after his humiliation at the Battle of Yavin.

STAR WARS: PRINCESS LEIA
TBC March 2015
Mark Waid (*Daredevil*) and Terry Dodson (*Captain Marvel*)'s miniseries deals with Leia's trauma in the aftermath of Alderaan's destruction.

STAR WARS: LORDS OF THE SITH
21 April 2015
In what sounds like a glorious piece of fan-service from EU author Paul S Kemp, Palpatine and Vader find themselves on a Rebel-held planet, kicking ass to stay alive.

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Rounding off the crew of the Ghost is Mandalorian Sabine Wren (Tiya Sircar).

them, but there are toys in which you could put a trooper from the top. And this is a problem! It's just a pair of wings and a pod. Is there an extension ladder? Or maybe wings fold up somehow?

"I come home in the evening, and I read the *Rebels* novels to make sure they jibe with what we are doing on the show," he adds when asked to compare the *Star Wars* universe to Disney's other blockbuster brand success story.

"I think Marvel does it really well, but their comic line doesn't necessary match up with what's going on in the films, and we try to line up what is another major difficulty. The benefit for our fans is they can think of the *Star Wars* universe as a coherent whole."





DESPITE THE PUSH TOWARDS THE NEW MOVIES AND THE GROWING DENSITY OF THE NEW STAR WARS UNIVERSE ORBITING AROUND THE CRIMSON super-giant that is *Episode VII*, Filoni doesn't feel as though what he's doing is being hemmed in by fixed points.

"Of course," he admits, "there are things that VII drives a lot. But [*Rebels* and *Episode VII*] are so far apart, it's very hard for one to affect the other except for the design of certain things. Luckily, they are not that close, and we can choose to go right of left. I talked to JJ only a couple of times, but he's very excited of what's going on in here."

If anything, rather than being resentful that his show is taking second place to a new movie, Filoni is happy to have someone to share the burden with. But perhaps 'burden' is the wrong word – after all, having this sort of role in the *Star Wars* saga has typically been the domain of a select few.

"I have been here for nine years now, and we were on our own with George for most of the time. But with guys like Rian [Johnson] and Gareth [Edwards]... their excitement reminds me of my own when I began. Everybody seems to be going through the same kind of stuff."

It's an exciting time to be given cinema's greatest toybox. Just because *Rebels* takes places between the prequel and original trilogies, and not in the wild expanse after Darth Vader's funeral pyre and the sound of Ewok party drums, it doesn't mean they're limited in a way that Abrams and the rest of the class of the new trilogy aren't.

"At the end of the day, it's still *Star Wars*," sums up Keith Kellogg. "You don't know what's going to happen, where they're going to go, where the story will take them. In *Clone Wars*, you knew, for example, that Anakin was going to survive. This show has so many possibilities and directions it can go."

The one-hour special, titled 'Spark Of Rebellion', is basically all you ever loved in *Star Wars* packed into 60 minutes. With all due respect to the grand master, the galaxy needed some fresh blood.

"No one is going to pretend to be George Lucas," adds Filoni.

Star Wars Rebels is airing from 3 October on Disney XD.



Joining the Inquisitor on adversarial duties is Agent Kallus (David Oyelowo).

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT
TBC Summer 2015
Effectively a reboot of the franchise, it's unknown how much DICE's take on the series will draw from the new material in this third instalment.

STAR WARS: EPISODE VII
18 December 2015
JJ Abrams is setting the tone for the first film in the trilogy. Filming is underway in Abu Dhabi, Iceland and London's Pinewood Studios.

UNTITLED STANDALONE I
16 December 2016
The subject is an enigma, but *Godzilla*'s Gareth Edwards is working on the movie with a script from Gary Whitta. This is rumoured to be a Boba Fett standalone.

STAR WARS: EPISODE VIII
TBC 2017
Rian Johnson is down to direct and co-write. He and his crew have been inspired by war film *Twelve O'Clock High* and adventure movie *Letters Never Sent*.

UNTITLED STANDALONE II
TBC 2018
All the standalone films are being overseen by original trilogy writer Lawrence Kasdan and *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* scribe Simon Kinberg.

STAR WARS: EPISODE IX
TBC 2019
Based on a story treatment from Johnson (continuing with his work from *Episode VIII*), *Episode IX* will provide the conclusion to the new trilogy.

UNTITLED STANDALONE III
TBC 2020
Chronicle's Josh Trank is to direct a standalone scheduled for after *Episode VIII* and *Episode IX*, so it could be in cinemas by 2020 going by the established release pattern.

UNTITLED GAME
Unknown date
Visceral Games, the developer behind *Dead Space* and *Battlefield*, are working on a mystery game. All we really know is that it will be released some time after *Battlefront*.

STAR WARS: DETOURS
Unknown date
A CGI comedy series featuring a number of short sketches, it was postponed indefinitely in the wake of Disney's acquisition of Lucasfilm.

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END OF THE ROAD?

THEY'VE BEEN SHOT, STABBED AND DEMON-ISED, BUT IS SEASON TEN FINALLY THE END FOR THE WINCHESTERS? JENSEN ACKLES, JARED PADALECKI AND JEREMY CARVER TALK FRIENDS, FANS AND AN EPIC CONCLUSION...

WORDS POPPY JAY PALMER
INTERVIEWS STEVE NASH

WWW.SCIFINOW.CO.UK

THE APOCALYPSE, BY DEFINITION, IS "THE COMPLETE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD," AS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLICAL BOOK OF REVELATION. SO IN THEORY, *Supernatural* should have ended three years ago with the Season Six doomsday storyline. Everything should have been destroyed, the Winchesters should be corpses, and we should all be crying. There is no bouncing back after the end of days.

But with no discernible end in sight, even executive producer Jeremy Carver is unsure of an ultimate conclusion. "I know that [creator] Eric Kripke always had an ending in mind that he hasn't yet shared with me. And I have an image and the like, but I always want to keep room for – as our colleague Bob Singer says – happy accident, as well.

"The show is continuing on and beyond, I think, any of our wildest dreams, so I don't think we want to limit ourselves. Just because I might have the perfect image in my head, doesn't mean one of these guys [Jensen Ackles and Jared Padalecki] can't come up with something OK."

There are arguably at least five times that the show could have ended: the Hellhounds dragging Dean to the fiery pits would have rounded everything off nicely; Dean's soul for Sam's life, the greatest sacrifice Dean could have made (much like Sam's life for Dean's soul when the former quit university for his brother in Episode One, if you want to get philosophical about it. Could have worked as a standalone movie).

Sam would be alone once again, free to live his life, but with none of the independence and sense of purpose that being a law student gave him. He'd had a chance to experience family after *finally* connecting with them and becoming a part of the bigger picture before having the feeling brutally ripped out from under his feet. He'd return to life before wendigos and djinn, but isolated and knowing what could have been. Textbook bittersweet ending.

We didn't even have to go that far. Swap out Sam for Dean, and we have the end of Season Two: Dean feeling alone and useless after Sam's dedication to bringing down Azazel backfires horribly. Likewise, Sam jumping into Lucifer's cage and Dean living out a full and happy existence with Lisa and Ben, and a six-foot-four man-shaped hole in his heart; Dean and Castiel damned to purgatory and Sam unable to do anything about it.

There have been countless opportunities to stage a proper



> "THE SHOW IS CONTINUING ON AND BEYOND ANY OF OUR WILDEST DREAMS"
> JEREMY CARVER

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resolution. But like most of its characters, *Supernatural* just won't die. But do we want it to? A lot of shows with large fanbases tend to run for too long, drop in quality and fall under the 'We've had enough, make it stop' spell, but if *Supernatural* wraps up come the Season Ten finale, a lot of people would be genuinely devastated to see it go.

Thankfully for us, that scenario doesn't seem likely. "I think we're all on the same page," says Jensen Ackles. "We still get excited about it, and I think that hasn't tarnished in ten years. I remember getting the last script of Season Nine, the season finale, and I got all giddy about it. I was excited to see what happens in Season Ten.

"I think as long as there's that fulfilment, that enjoyment, that excitement, then yeah, we will keep going, and as long as people are hanging in there with us and are still entertained, then we love telling the stories of both of these guys."

Padalecki also remains as enthusiastic as ever, but knows there must be an end in sight. "If the show's quality diminishes – which I have no doubt that it will not in [Jeremy Carver's] capable hands – but if the show ever reaches a spot where we get a phone call from Jeremy or whoever like, 'You know what guys, at this point in time we've kind of said what we feel needs to be said and can be said…'

"I truly do deeply care about this show, and about Sam Winchester. I mean, I'm 32 years old, and I've spent nine years of my life with him. So I don't want him to be broken down and beaten down into something that I end up not respecting."

Season finales have not been kind to the Winchesters. They've been stabbed, shot, rendered comatose, left soulless and damned to perdition. The end of Season Nine saw Dean as a demon and Sam searching for his missing brother. To its stars, however, the show has been very kind indeed.

"We know the show enough and our characters enough that if there is an end coming, I think we'll all see it," says Padalecki. "But for me, I've been able to do a lot doing this show. I've got some kids now and a wife, and I love my personal life very, very much. When it's time to hang up the Sam Winchester hat, I'll welcome that chapter."

That's not to say Padalecki wouldn't be sorry to see the end of *Supernatural* and, possibly even more, the end of his on-screen relationship with Ackles. "This sounds like a cop-out, but I feel like I'd be doing a disservice to try and put into words what I've learnt from Jensen," he says. "We literally have more than grown up together. We went from single 20-somethings to fathers and husbands, and it's hard to kind of quantify with a few short sentences exactly what all that encompasses."

Unsurprisingly, Ackles reciprocates. "I've learnt a lot from Jared," he says. "He is a brother on and off screen, and we'll forever have a friendship that is a lot different from most, because it's really truly unique because of what we've gone through together, and it's been quite an amazing ride. I'm glad we're still trekking along."

Like a lot of long-running shows, a family has formed on set over time, made up of a collection of close-knit actors, writers and crew. The people involved in the production process may be what have made *Supernatural* such a cult success. Their dedication to the show continues to astound, and fetches praise with fans and creators alike.

"What impresses me the most about not just [Ackles and Padalecki], but the rest of the cast and the crew and the writers, is that they remain the hardest-working bunch I've ever had the pleasure of working with," says Carver.

"I hate to be all military on it, but there's no quitting – anybody – and that starts with the stories and continues on to the execution. There's so much story left to tell, which is sort of remarkable to think about, given that we're in Season Ten already."

The infectious enthusiasm is passed on to viewers, spawning one of the most dedicated fanbases of any modern genre show. From it, a cornucopia of fan art, fiction, songs, videos and more have been created in tribute to *Supernatural*.

"Just when you think we are able to identify our fans, I'll have a 75-year-old TSA gentleman check my passport,

VIVA VANCOUVER

Jared and Jensen on their adopted hometown

The Winchesters are famous for traversing the US in their weapon-stocked 1967 Chevy Impala. They've hunted ghoulies and ghosties in lakes, forests and mountain ranges right the way across the country, but Vancouver, Canada, stands in for most of it.

"When it's a show about hunting vampires or demons or something, it's much scarier and more thrilling for the audience for us to hunt them in the doom and gloom than if we were walking down the beach with a bunch of palm trees and we're like, 'Do you see anything scary?' says Padalecki. "We could be riding the little pedibikes going, like, 'Do you see anything, Dean?' Getting suntans and stuff."

"And the cool temperature there affords us to wear coats throughout the season, which then affords us to hide all our weapons in them," says Ackles. "I think if we were shooting in, say, Atlanta, we would be a sweaty mess for about half a season."



Are the brothers' escapades finally coming to an end?





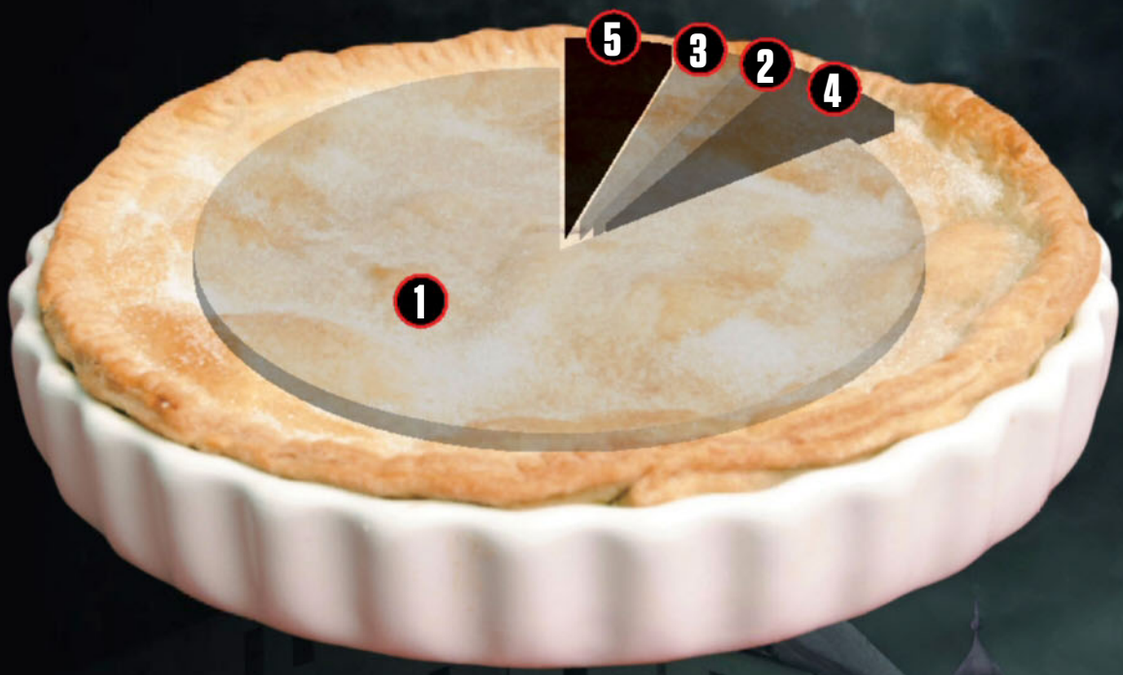


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WHAT'S DEAD SHOULD STAY DEAD

But not in Supernatural, where they all have a go!



1 DEAD DEAN

SHOT IN THE CHEST
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

RUN OVER BY A CAR
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

SQUASHED BY A DESK
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

CHOKED ON A SAUSAGE
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

SLIPPED IN THE SHOWER
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

POISONED BY BAD TACOS
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

ELECTROCUTED BY RAZOR
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

KILLED BY SAM WITH AN AXE
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

SHOT WITH AN ARROW BY A WAITRESS
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

MAULED BY A GOLDEN RETRIEVER
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

SHOT IN A ROBBERY
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

90 OTHER OFF-SCREEN DEATHS
Mystery Spot (3.11)
Reversed by time loop

MAULED BY HELLHOUNDS AND SENT TO HELL
No Rest For The Wicked (3.16)
Raised from perdition by Castiel

FUTURE! DEAN KILLED BY LUCIFER IN SAM'S BODY
The End (5.04)
Future rewritten

HEART STOPPED BY A DOCTOR TO TALK TO DEATH
Appointment In Samarra (6.11)
Heart restarted by doctor

SENT TO PURGATORY
Survival Of The Fittest (7.23)
Escapes Purgatory

STABBED BY METATRON WITH AN ANGEL BLADE
Do You Believe In Miracles (9.23)
Brought back as a demon

TOTAL DEATHS
106

2 JOHN

SELLS SOUL AND KILLED BY AZAZEL TO SAVE DEAN'S LIFE
In My Time Of Dying (2.01)
END GAME

KILLED BY AZAZEL IN THE PAST
In The Beginning (4.03)
Brought back by Azazel after Mary makes a deal (Notes: body used as Michael's vessel)

TOTAL DEATHS
2

3 BOBBY

APPARENTLY KILLED BY THE CROATOAN VIRUS IN THE FUTURE
The End (5.04)
Future rewritten

NECK SNAPPED BY LUCIFER
Swan Song (5.22)
Resurrected by Castiel

SHOT BY DICK ROMAN IN 9.09. IN A COMA AND EVENTUALLY DIES IN 9.10
How To Win Friends And Influence Monsters / Death's Door (7.09 / 7.10)
END GAME [Notes: reappears as a ghost and in Sam's subconscious]

TOTAL DEATHS
3

4 SAM

STABBED BY JAKE TALLEY
All Hell Breaks Loose P1 (2.21)
Brought back when Dean sells his soul to a Crossroad Demon

KILLED BY A WISH (STRUCK BY LIGHTNING)
Wishful Thinking (4.08)
Reversed by removing a magic coin from a wishing well

LUNGS REMOVED BY ZACHARIAH
Sympathy For The Devil (5.01)
Lungs put back by Zachariah

KILLED BY ANNA
The Song Remains The Same (5.13)
Resurrected by Michael

SHOT BY HUNTERS
Dark Side Of The Moon (5.16)
Resurrected by Joshua

JUMPS INTO LUCIFER'S CAGE
Swan Song (5.22)
Raised from perdition by Castiel but without his soul

ESCORTED TO HELL TO SAVE BOBBY'S SOUL
Taxi Driver (8.19)
Escorted back to Earth

TOTAL DEATHS
7

5 CASTIEL

KILLED BY RAPHAEL
Lucifer Rising (4.22)
Resurrected by God

FUTURE CASTIEL KILLED BY DEMONS
The End (5.04)
Future rewritten

EXPLODED BY LUCIFER
Swan Song (5.22)
Resurrected by God

WALKS INTO RESERVOIR TO RELEASE LEVIATHAN
Meet The New Boss (7.01)
Reappears later on, but without his memory

SENT TO PURGATORY
Survival Of The Fittest (7.23)
Escapes Purgatory

KILLED BY REAPER APRIL KELLY
I'm No Angel (9.03)
Resurrected by Ezekiel

TOTAL DEATHS
6



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look at me and go, 'Love your show, man. Seen every episode with my granddaughter,'" says Ackles.

Since the show started in 2004, we've seen the brothers go from reckless boys who act first and think later to men who, though still reckless, are more aware of the consequences of their actions and the sacrifices they've made. The family business used to be Sam and Dean's idea of fun, but people – including themselves – have been hurt, killed or worse, and are past feeling the burn that comes with the job.

As with Sam and Dean, fans of the show have also done a lot of growing up since it started. We don't fight vengeful spirits and make deals with Crossroad Demons, but Padalecki still finds the symmetry fascinating.

"We meet dozens of teen-somethings and early 20-somethings who have been watching the show since they were in school, and now they're college graduates, getting driving licences or having kids, as we have," he says.

"It's remarkable. It's a great feeling, and it's such an honour to be part of it. Jensen and I look at each other now and again, and we're like, 'Man, are people going to keep watching the show? Are they going to stick with us?' And we realise that not only are people who have been with us from the beginning continuing to watch, but we're gaining a whole new rite of passage for 15- and 16-year-olds, girls and boys, which is awesome.

"It's not the classic coming-of-age story, but it is about struggling with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, which helps out a lot of teen-somethings who feel like high school is the worst or this person is the worst. This is obviously a very different world, but it's nice to be able to be there for a teenager, and you feel like the world is against you. These boys literally have the world against them, but they keep fighting. I think it's a great message."

Without an end in sight, literally anything can happen. It's difficult to tell what Season Ten has in store for the boys, but we can be sure of one thing at least: it's going to hurt like a bitch.

Supernatural: Season Ten airs from 7 October on The CW in the US. It currently has no broadcaster in the UK.

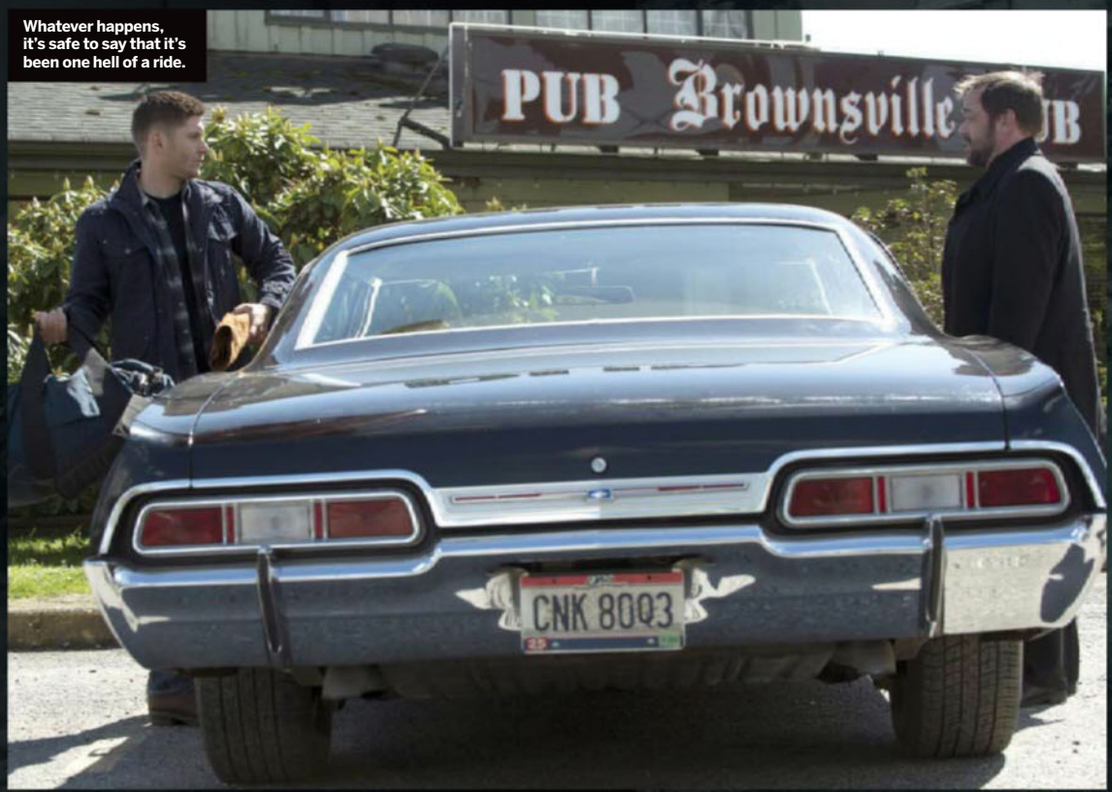






"JENSEN AND I LOOK AT EACH OTHER, AND WE'RE LIKE, 'MAN, ARE PEOPLE GOING TO KEEP WATCHING THIS SHOW?"
JARED PADALECKI





Whatever happens, it's safe to say that it's been one hell of a ride.

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HEROES IN A HARD SELL

HOW TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES TOOK ON THE HATERS

THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES HAVE EMERGED FROM THE OOZE ONCE MORE TO DOMINATE THE BOX OFFICE. WE TALK TO DIRECTOR JONATHAN LIEBESMAN ABOUT LISTENING TO THE FANS, IGNORING THE HATERS AND WHY HE WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE SURE THE PIZZA MADE THE CUT...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

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TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Heroes In A Hard Sell



AS SOON AS IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT MICHAEL BAY WOULD BE PRODUCING A BRAND NEW FILM BASED ON KEVIN EASTMAN AND PETER LAIRD'S *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the online fan community cracked its collective knuckles and limbered up to indulge in some good old-fashioned bashing.

Fast-forward a couple of years, however, and we find ourselves looking at a film that is cruising towards the figure of $200 million at the US box office alone, with a sequel in the bag. We have to imagine that director Jonathan Liebesman is breathing a sigh of relief.

"Yeah, definitely an awesome result," he chuckles. "I've had not awesome results, so this is great." So how did it all go right?

IT'S MADE BY PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE FRANCHISE

As fans, we've all got our check-list of what we absolutely must see in a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie, and we're ready to fly off the handle if we don't see them, so it's reassuring to know that Liebesman is coming from the same place as us.

"Definitely," he tells us. "When I was a kid growing up in South Africa, [the cartoon] was my exposure to the Ninja Turtles – the cartoon and the first two movies were what I loved the most. Then it was amazing when I came onto the movie and [co-creator] Kevin Eastman was camped out in the producers' office, and that was when I was introduced to the original comic-books. I was so impressed by how hardcore the Ninja Turtles were when they were first introduced in the black-and-white comics by Eastman and Laird, and that was very inspiring in terms of the visual style of the movie."

"I WAS SO IMPRESSED BY HOW HARDCORE THE NINJA TURTLES WERE WHEN THEY WERE FIRST INTRODUCED IN THE BLACK-AND-WHITE COMICS"
JONATHAN LIEBESMAN

When we press him on what exactly it was that he couldn't stand to lose, Liebesman is quite happy to reel off a list. "I absolutely wanted to see how the Turtles became Mutant Ninja Turtles, and I wanted to make sure we had cowabungas and pizza – which sounds funny, but lots of obvious things get lost in the room sometimes, so that was what was important to me; those touchstones that I fell in love with a kid."

IT'S FOR EVERY GENERATION OF TURTLES FANS

It's a sad truth that films made up entirely of fan service don't often work, so we're not surprised to hear that a huge amount of effort was spent on

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making sure the Turtles appealed to a younger audience. The franchise has always changed with the times, but the challenge was finding a way to keep the magic without losing what makes the Turtles... Turtles.

"*Ninja Turtles* has an incredibly passionate fanbase, and I'm a fan myself," Liebesman explains. "Mike [Bay] had this vision, which I think is correct – a vision of making the Turtles look different, because you have to update them to make them realistic, because you won't believe that they exist in this same world as your actors."

A big part of this was making sure that each turtle had their own personality and distinct look. "That was something Mike had learned from *Transformers*," Liebesman remembers. "He wanted mums to be able to tell them apart. And I think what we also wanted to do was bring a whole new audience to *Ninja Turtles*, because you need the film to make its money back. The good thing about being able to do big-budget movies is you have amazing technology to make things you could never see before. The downside is you need those movies to make their money back, and so you do need to attract new fans, so we tried to create designs that maintained the characteristics that myself and other fans had fallen in love with from when I was a kid watching the cartoons, and designs that would look realistic when rendered in the movie."

GETTING THE TONE RIGHT

One of the things that seemed to cause the most divisive reaction in the film's trailers was the apparent confusion in tone. That first trailer had William Fichtner's Eric Sachs delivering a chilling monologue about crime in the city as a skyscraper collapsed and the Foot Clan stormed a subway station. How exactly were the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles going to fit into what was looking like an increasingly Christopher Nolan-styled blockbuster?

"I think finding the tone is one of the most difficult parts of the movie, and I think that took myself and the producers almost two years to finally find the right balance," he admits. "Where you could have the fun and the charm that makes the Turtles so loveable and the scope and scale you expect from a Michael Bay picture, and have them live in the same world."

Crucially, the filmmakers took great care not to lose sight of who these four heroes were. "I think that they're kind of like the most absurd combination, right:

MEET SHREDDER

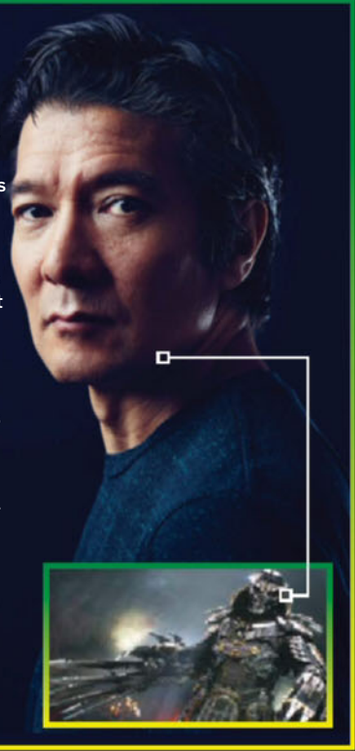
Tohoru Masamune tells SciFiNow about playing the Turtles' nemesis

Few cartoon villains have been seared into the consciousness as Shredder. The vengeful, furious and deadly gang leader and his never-ending quest to put an end to our four heroes was going to be a key part of any *Turtles* movie. So when it came to playing the character, Tohoru Masamune tells us it was pretty intimidating.

"Here's the interesting thing about getting into a really established franchise like this, and obviously a very iconic villain," he begins. "It's tricky, because you have to enter any role without any preconceived notions, but on the other hand there are expectations. I almost feel like there were times I had so much trouble wrapping my head around it, I almost felt like a kid pretending I was Shredder! I almost had to go to that place: 'I'll be Shredder!'"

The issue of who was going to play Shredder was one of the mysteries of the production; it was assumed that William Fichtner would, and Masamune tells us that he wasn't told who he would be playing until he got the part. However, he says that filming went relatively smoothly. "Certain things were evolving, and I was just going with it," he tells us. "It was a smooth process once you get in there. It was pretty intense, there was a lot going on, clearly there were a lot of balls in the air, and things were changing... Everything that was shot I had to learn in both English and Japanese. It's hard enough learning your lines in one language! You just have to trust that things are going to come together, and you look at the people in charge, and you pretty much know that everything's going to kick ass."

When it comes to the question of why the leader of the Foot Clan has made such an impact on audiences, Masamune points out that behind the mask, armour and claws, there is a human being there, and one with some serious issues. "There have been various incarnations of this character who obviously has been the embodiment of pure cruelty and evil," he tells us. "But it actually comes from a place of very deep pain, and depending on what your source material is... That's what draws me to the character, someone who is very daunting and cruel, but the origins of it come from very deep pain, and that's why I think he's such an iconic villain."



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Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle. And when you get to know them you discover that they're normal kids, they're teenagers; Michaelangelo's goofy, Leo's trying to keep his brothers together, Raph's the rebel, Donnie's the nerd – I think all these things make them incredibly relatable. And it's that absurdity sort of counterpointed with the fact that they're completely like everyone you know that makes them relatable, and I think leads to their longevity."

LISTEN TO THE FANS

It's the same story with everything Bay touches, but from the word go the fans were all over the Turtles like Michelangelo on a hot slice. What must have been encouraging for Liebesman was remembering just how successful Bay's films end up being. "Mike gets that on all his movies, then the movies come out and everyone loves them and they make a ton of money. I think there were moments where I was panicking and he said, 'Let them see the movie.' Obviously, we take fan input very seriously, and if there's constructive stuff it will get into the movie. No one is saying, 'don't listen to people,' but you've also got a job to do, and you can't be paralysed by the constant bashing. That's not helpful, and so that was where he was really cool: when I was like, 'Wow, there is a lot of pushback on certain things,' he was like, 'Wait for the them to see it. It's cool, don't worry.'"

Indeed, Liebesman was determined that the fans wouldn't be ignored. Rather than write off all the online criticism, he took care to listen, and made some adjustments accordingly. "Without your fans you will have no movie," he stresses. "So it's hugely important, and I'm a fan, it would be important for me to feel heard by a movie that I was passionate about, so it's important to show that respect and make the effort to listen. Because again, fans are able to see the forest through the trees. When you look at talkback, a lot of it is not very constructive, but some of it's actually quite brilliant. I love seeing what fans are saying."

BRINGING THE TURTLES TO LIFE

When it came to creating the Turtles, Liebesman had a very clear idea of how to bring the cartoon heroes to life. "When I watched *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes*, that blew me away, just the amount of personality that came from Andy Serkis's performance, so I knew that if we cast the right actors we could bring a lot of character and charm to these turtles very quickly." The four actors playing the Turtles would be able to interact with the actors playing the humans on set, including Megan Fox as reporter April O'Neil, Will Arnett as her wise-cracking cameraman Vernon Fenwick, and William Fichtner as the mysterious Eric Sachs. Liebesman tells us that each of the three leading cast members lends a vital quality to the film.

"A guy like Fichtner helps ground the concept. Megan is very fascinating, and her outspokenness helps a character like April O'Neil, and then Arnett is a brilliant comedian. He sort of takes the onus off the other actors – and sometimes even the Turtles – to be funny, because he's extremely skilful."

DIMENSION X AND BEYOND

With a second *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie confirmed, the fans are already speculating about what we'll see in the sequel. The first film was relatively grounded – and understandably so, given that it had to introduce Leonardo, Donatello, Raphael and Michelangelo, as well as Splinter and Shredder. When it comes to taking the franchise further, Liebesman tells us that we can expect to see the sci-fi elements pushed further, including Dimension X. "I think the producers are talking about that – I think all that stuff is on the table from what I was hearing," he teases.

"You just don't have the budget in the first one to do all that stuff. You don't want to spread yourself thin, and you want to be able to pick a scope that you can do well. So things like Krang, Bebop and Rocksteady, you just don't have the budget to put those in and execute that with the amount of thought they deserve. Things that I wish I could put in the first movie were characters like Casey Jones and Krang; those were hard to let go of. When we were like, 'OK, we can't afford all of this,' those were the tough characters." Fingers crossed for some hockey action and the appearance of a certain evil brain in 2016...

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is in cinemas 17 October.



Efforts were made to give all the Turtles their own distinct personalities.



Tony Shalhoub was added as the voice of Splinter late in production.



The identity of who would be playing Shredder was a guarded secret for a while.





"YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE BUDGET TO PUT KRANG, BEBOP AND ROCKSTEADY IN"
JONATHAN LIEBESMAN

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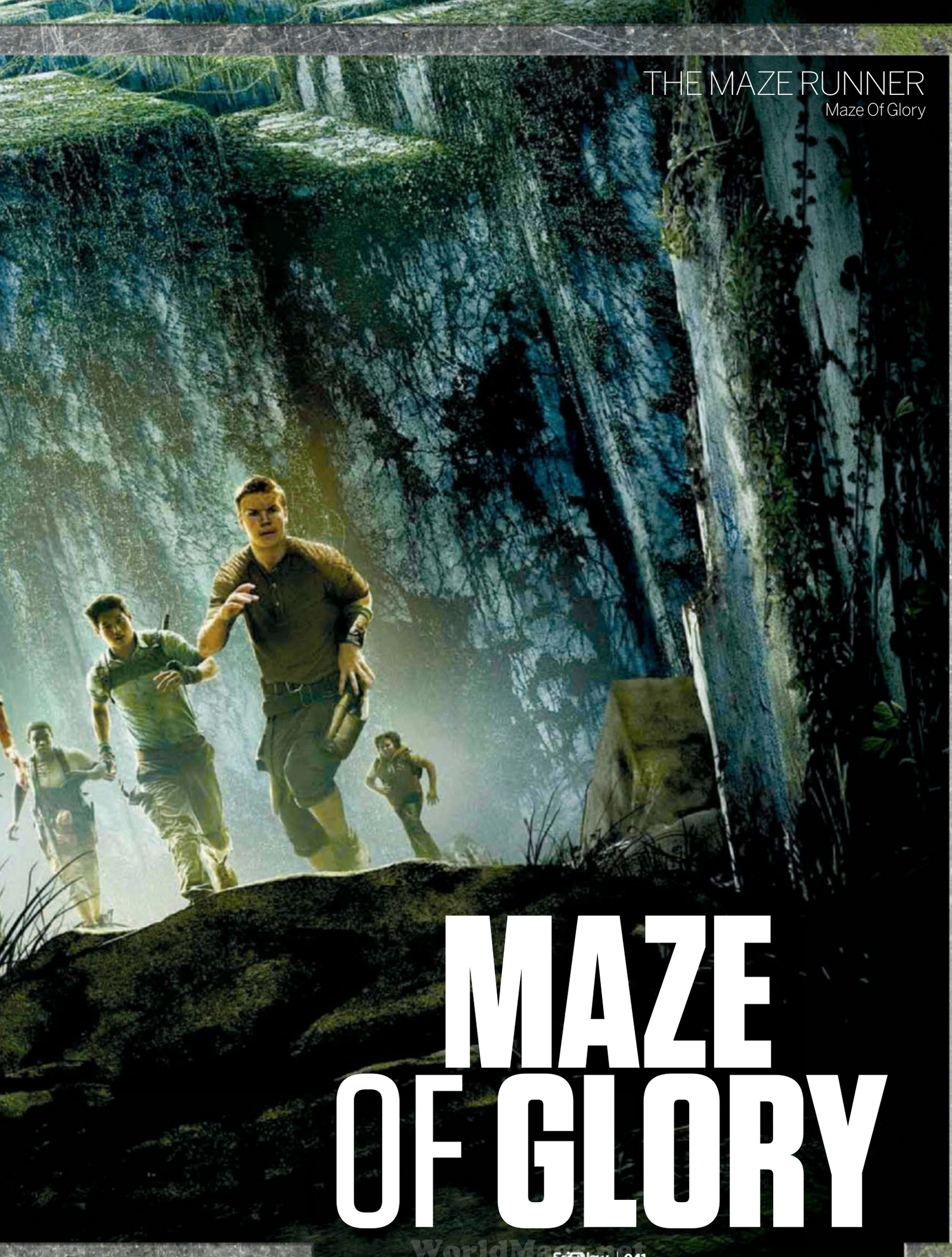
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EVERYWHERE YOU TURN, TEENAGERS ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES IN DYSTOPIAN FUTURES, BUT THE MAZE RUNNER IS DIFFERENT – NOT JUST DUE TO ITS CAST OF RISING STARS, BUT FOR A VISION THAT HEAVILY DRAWS ON EIGHTIES ADVENTURE MOVIES. WE FIND OUT MORE FROM DIRECTOR WES BALL AND STARS WILL POULTER AND THOMAS BRODIE-SANGSTER...

WORDS **KRYSTAL SIM**

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MAZE OF GLORY

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BIG MOVIE
The Maze Runner

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THERE'S A GULF BETWEEN ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD THAT YOUNG-ADULT FICTION TRIES TO BRIDGE. OVER THE LAST DECADE, A MULTITUDE OF YA NOVELS HAVE BEEN ADAPTED INTO FILM franchises, from the high romance of *The Twilight Saga* to the dystopian worlds of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*.

Each touches a different nerve, but are these films dipping into the dark night of the teenage soul in a way that resonates with a wider audience?

Step forward *The Maze Runner* – adapted from James Dashner's bestselling novel by first-time director Wes Ball, who describes it as "*Lord Of The Flies* meets *Lost*, with a little of *The Twilight Zone* thrown in."

The story follows Thomas (*Teen Wolf* star Dylan O'Brien), a young man with no memory of his past, who wakes in an elevator jolting upwards. When the doors open, Thomas meets a group of other teenage boys, who welcome him to the Glade – their prison at the centre of a monstrous maze.

Ball's childhood in Florida helped shape his directorial debut. The former Boy Scout said he grew up building forts and tree-houses, and connected with the adventurous spirit of the story.

"What made me want to make this movie was the idea of a group of boys creating their own world and surviving together," he says. "There's something very romantic about being on your own when you're at that age. Adults are always telling you where to go and what to do. That was why I loved to build things in the woods and be self-reliant. There is something powerful in that.

"The story isn't about young people trying to kill each other, or what it's like to be in high school, or a romance. *The Maze Runner* shows young people dealing with adult situations. It's not bubblegum – they're trying to stay alive."

Monolithic stone walls encircle the Glade, and each morning giant concrete doors open to reveal the vast labyrinth, before closing again at night. These vine-draped walls keep the Gladers trapped, but also out of the reach of biomechanical behemoths the Grievers. Their stings can kill, but not before the victim suffers terrible agony and banishment from the camp.

So far, so grim – but it's *The Maze Runner*'s sinister tone that will set it apart from its peers, according to actor Will Poulter (*Son Of Rambow*), who plays antagonist Gally. "One of the things that's left me slightly disappointed at the competition is that they didn't quite go as dark as I thought they should," says Poulter, adamant not to name names. "They didn't explore the dark corners that we do. *The Maze Runner* is quite violent and gory, without being overstated."

Fellow Brit and co-star Thomas Brodie-Sangster (*Game Of Thrones*), who plays Glade second-in-command and fan-favourite Newt, tends to agree.



Kaya Scodelario stars as the Glade's lone female, Teresa.



The teens' lives are dictated around living by – and trying to escape from – the titular maze.



The cast predominantly comprises young up-and-comers.

GRIEVE 'EM
Why Wes Ball is keeping the Grievers under wraps

There's one important omission from *The Maze Runner* trailer, and that's a full shot of biomechanical beasties the Grievers. Director Wes Ball wants to keep hidden... for now.

"Some trailers leave you thinking, 'I've seen the movie now' or they're selling something they don't have. Fans expect one thing and get pissed off.

"If someone knows what's coming then everything I did up to that point is a waste of time. Also, we have the Maze to sell to the audience first."

Described in the novel as slug-like creatures with biomechanical limbs, these menacing creatures patrol the Maze at night, and to be bitten by one means... well, it's not good.

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"Wes always wanted more," he says. "He wanted it to be gritty and dirty, and he wanted more blood. It should be scary to a young audience. If things were picture-perfect and lovely, you wouldn't buy it."

The Glade certainly looks idyllic, but there's nothing tranquil about the boys' confinement. Their memories have all been wiped and they have no idea why they've been sent to the Glade, or by who. Yet each member of the community has a role to play, from the Builders who maintain the camp to the Runners who spend their days searching for a way out.

The connections between the young men are what give the story its heart, says Sangster. "What I liked about the script was the camaraderie between this group of lads," he says. "It didn't make that seem like a weak thing to do. These guys genuinely care for one another, and they just get on with things. They look out for one another."

The predominantly male cast goes against the current trend for female-fronted dystopian stories. Poulter believes the movie has something to say about male relationships, but shares more with the classic adventures of our childhoods.

"You see these young men form very strong bonds," he says. "They become a family, and that sense of fellowship is found throughout films like *The Goonies*, *Stand By Me* and *Hook*. *The Maze Runner* has more in common with those films than *Divergent* or *The Hunger Games*.

WHAT IS INTERESTING ABOUT THE DYSTOPIAN GENRE," HE ADDS, "IS THE COMMENT IT MAKES ABOUT THE INSECURITIES WITHIN SOCIETY.

It's important that films educate a young audience so they can bring about change. Showing young people take a stand, as the Gladers do, is brilliant – that's conscious, intelligent cinema."

Ball is all too aware of the pitfalls that can stem from the arguably limiting label of 'young adult.' He believes *The Maze Runner* has universal appeal.

"It's taken on this stigma," he admits, "and does put a target on our back. We didn't make a kids' movie; we made a movie with kids in it. Our story has a cool concept and a strong mystery behind it. Hopefully, people will want to see more, because we take some chances with our ending."

The cast was put through a two-week boot camp on the set in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to get used to the location and each other before filming began. Snake wranglers picked up between 10 and 15 snakes a day, as the actors sweltered in the heat and avoided wolf spiders.



***Game Of Thrones*' Thomas Brodie-Sangster plays the fan-favourite Newt.**

"OTHER YA FILMS DON'T EXPLORE THE DARK CORNERS THAT WE DO"
WILL POULTER

"Horseflies are bastards," says Sangster. "They can bite through jeans. Other than that, it was fine camping in the Glade, and very much like how it comes across on film. There wasn't really much shade, so you just had to sweat and drink loads of water. When it came to doing a scene, we were heat-soaked, dirty and in the moment. I loved it, because you felt like you were really there."

The gargantuan walls of the Maze are computer-generated, but the opening and closing concrete doors, as well as the impressive Glade campsite, are very real. Poulter says having practical sets made things easier for the cast.

"Films that have too many CG elements are often not that stimulating for an actor, so I was very grateful for those sets. We didn't have to react to loads of green screen – what you see in the frame is what we were reacting to every day. Wes is a genuine

YOUTUBE IF YOU WANT TO

Fan reaction trailers... The Maze Runner's cast is watching you

If Game Of Thrones has taught us anything besides not to RSVP to any wedding in Westeros, it's that reaction videos are amazing. Book adaptations in particular have spawned in-depth reviews delving into everything from casting rumours, fan theories and lore breakdowns to our favourite: trailer reactions. There are countless clips of YouTubers watching clips and documenting their first impressions.

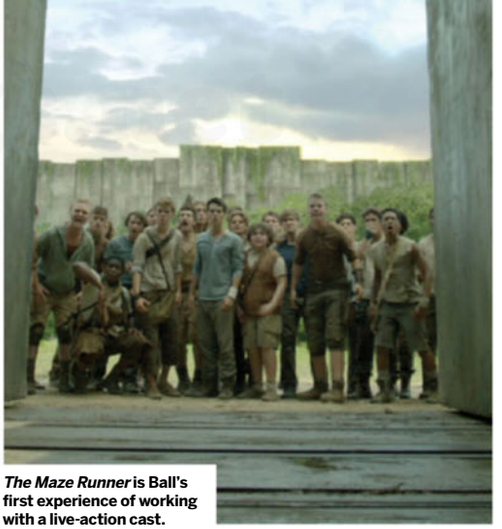
We found out that the cast and crew of *The Maze Runner* actually kept a close eye on fans' posts throughout the making of the movie.

"It's been fantastic watching trailer reaction videos," beams director Wes Ball. "I've seriously watched every single one of those. It's great to see these kids pull faces when they see the Griever or their favourite character appears. I could just watch that for the rest of my life and be happy. I want to get a reaction out of the audience – it's why I'm doing this."

Thomas Brodie-Sangster also enjoyed the reactions to Newt. "Those are quite fun to watch," he says. "Everyone takes away something different from a book. I thought that even if the fans liked the trailer, there would still be that moment where it wasn't exactly what they pictured, but there was none of that. I think fans like my character because he's everyone's friend, but wouldn't be afraid to tell you how things really are."



Will Poulter co-stars as the high-ranking Gally.



The Maze Runner is Ball's first experience of working with a live-action cast.





visionary; he sees things that no one else sees, and visualises every single aspect of a frame perfectly. But he did say to me that none of that shit mattered unless we got the characters and performances right."

BALL FACED A BIG CHALLENGE: WORKING WITH ACTORS FOR THE FIRST TIME TO ADAPT A MUCH-LOVED BOOK IN JUST EIGHT WEEKS, WITH THE BUDGET OF A ROMANTIC comedy. 20th Century Fox entrusted him with *The Maze Runner* after his CG short film *Ruin* caught their attention.

"There was something about *Ruin* that made it stand out," says Ball. "Audiences are used to seeing destroyed and bleak worlds, but this was a romantic world – like going on a quest with Indiana Jones to find an ancient Mayan temple… You have no idea what has happened, but the mystery pulls you in. It's this big saga that deals with hard sci-fi ideas wrapped in fantasy adventure. It's my *Star Wars*."

Ruin's overgrown, post-apocalyptic setting showed Fox that Ball had a talent for creating worlds. He was given Dashner's book and began to design concept art around his impressions.

"I created this one image of a kid with a spear in his hand," he says, 'lit by really harsh sunlight with trees, and these monolithic stone walls surrounding him. That was it: I wanted to see that movie."

Newcomer Ball was given the directing gig on the strength of his short film *Ruin*.



"THE MAZE RUNNER HAS MORE IN COMMON WITH THE GOONIES AND STAND BY ME THAN THE HUNGER GAMES OR DIVERGENT"
WILL POULTER



The young cast includes Dylan O'Brien and Aml Ameen.

The pressure of meeting fan and studio expectations might have fazed another director, but the Ball proved to be a natural with the cast, and kept things relaxed on location. "When I was told that he'd never worked with actors before, I was worried," admits Sangster. "But *Ruin* was so visually stunning that I knew Wes had a great eye. Having his passion made us want to give everything we could. He must have had a lot of pressure on him, especially with it being a studio film, but he always kept his cool."

Hardcore fans of the books call themselves 'Dashner's Army' or 'The Gladers', and they have been extremely vocal in their support for the film. "It was fantastic to have such a mass of people supporting us," says Poulter. "As soon as we were cast, they followed us on Twitter and supported us every day. We wanted them to know their story was being looked after. I think we've followed the book quite religiously, and James [Dashner] has said he's happier with the film than his novel."

But what about leading man, Dylan O'Brien? Ball says the down-to-earth actor is "going to be a star," but thankfully without the diva trappings. "Dylan really puts his heart into it," he says. "You just want to root for the guy. His dad is a camera operator, so he understands the work that goes into making movies. There's no real ego to him: he just wants to do a good job as an actor, but he gets the hard work that everyone around him puts in, with none of that kind of diva crap. I keep telling him, 'You better not become an arsehole after this.'"

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A-MAZE-ING MAZES

At SciFiNow, we're good at solving labyrinths. It only takes us a Minotaur to...



HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE (2005)

One of the creepiest mazes has to be the constantly shifting labyrinth that Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) traverses during the Triwizard Tournament. It's a heart-pounding scene to watch, rather like the Dark Side cave in *The Empire Strikes Back*. It's also a final moment of innocence for Potter in a lot of ways: when he and Cedric Diggory (Robert Pattinson) touch the Triwizard Cup at the centre, they're transported to the graveyard in Little Hangleton, where they face a very real evil.



THE SHINING (1980)

In a movie littered with iconic scenes, the image of Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) charging through the hedge maze after his precocious son Danny (Danny Lloyd) stays with you. The weeks of isolation in the haunted Overlook Hotel trigger a murderous rampage that climaxes in his attempt to bury the hatchet with his wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) in distinctly final fashion. He becomes the monster in the middle of the maze, stampeding towards his victim – and ultimately his doom.



PAN'S LABYRINTH (2006)

Dark fairy tale *Pan's Labyrinth* blends the harsh realities of the Spanish Civil War with the fantasies of a young girl named Ofelia (Ivana Baquero). When her mother marries a brutal army captain, she retreats into her own imagination. She meets a faun (Doug Jones) living in an ancient labyrinth, who tells her that she can take her rightful place as princess of the Underworld by completing three tasks, during which she comes across grotesque and fantastical creatures. Ofelia doesn't defeat the monster in her maze, but the settings and symbolism are spellbinding.



LABYRINTH (1986)

Any maze ruled by David Bowie wins, and Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* is simply perfect. When Sarah (Jennifer Connolly) wishes the Goblin King (Bowie) would take her little brother away, she doesn't expect him to follow through with it. She has 13 hours to get him back before he becomes another goblin, and Jareth throws obstacles at her at every turn. What's so wonderful about the labyrinth is how it twists your perceptions, plus it's bursting with memorable characters. The Esher-inspired final confrontation is incredibly stylish too.

The cast also features plenty of young talent, including Ki Hong Lee as head Runner Minho, as well as Brits Aml Ameen (*Kidulthood*) and Kaya Scodelario (*Skins*) as Teresa. It's her arrival, just days after Thomas's, that upsets the natural order – not just because she's the first girl to appear, but because she seems to know him. The already skeptical Gally sees the pair as a threat to everything the Gladers have built.

"Something about Thomas makes Gally not trust him," says Poulter. "He instinctively feels suspicious, like from some distant memory. Gally believes Thomas and Teresa are working together to destroy what we've created."

The young director and up-and-coming cast are a gamble, but one that may just pay off. Does this herald the rise of the visual effects expert-turned-director? Ball seems to think so. "There does seem to be a trend for visual effects guys coming in as directors," he says. "It doesn't always work, but these guys understand the craft of telling a story, and use effects as a tool, not as empty spectacle. People like [*District 9*'s] Neill Blomkamp and [*Godzilla*'s] Gareth Edwards grew up with these tools, and having that knowledge helps you make efficient choices and keep costs down. When a director doesn't know what they want, they're spending a lot of money searching for it."

A sequel to *The Maze Runner* is already on the cards, with Ball again at the helm, but it depends on the movie's performance at the box office. The director believes the underlying message of the film speaks to insecurities about the world we will leave behind, but he hopes that audiences enjoy it first and foremost.

"I wanted to make something that was entertaining," he says, "and touched on the notion of the younger generation paying for your mistakes. Then there's the experience of growing up in the walls your parents gave you and being told that what's outside is dangerous. I hope people want to see more, because we'll give it to them if they show up.

"Robert Zemeckis said that the best movies are the ones that have the perfect blend of spectacle and truth. Truth is the hard part. Story and character is what makes you feel. It makes you want to root for someone or be scared for them. I didn't want *The Maze Runner* to be just empty calories. It's about finding the courage to face the unknown and find your own way."

The Maze Runner is in cinemas 10 October.

ONCE BITTEN...

How one scene became the film's cornerstone

One key scene in *The Maze Runner* that fans of the novel will be looking out for is Ben's banishment from the camp after he's bitten by one of the Grievers.

Victims of a Grievers' sting undergo a nasty process called 'The Changing.' Violent mood swings and murderous impulses come as standard, the added twist being that it also causes past memories to resurface. In his changed state of mind, Ben sees Thomas as a threat, and tries to murder him. The question is, why?

"Ben's banishment was one of the scenes that made me want to make this movie," says Ball. "I mean, it's painful, because they're banishing one of their brothers, but it's something that they have to do."

Thomas Brodie-Sangster also says the scene was harrowing to film. "What happens to Ben is horrible," he says. "It's a nasty death, and through it all he's throwing up gunky stuff. But it has to happen. The Glade is actually a really beautiful place where everyone gets on and has a job to do. It's your choice to go out and have this happen to you."



With two additional books in the series, success could see *The Maze Runner* kickstarting its own franchise.

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GIVING THE DEVIL HIS DUE

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**
INTERVIEWS **JAMES HOARE**

DANIEL RADCLIFFE TELLS SCIFINOW ABOUT GOING TO HELL AND THE MOST CHALLENGING ROLE OF HIS CAREER IN ALEXANDRE AJA'S SUPERNATURAL HORROR SHOW HORNS...

IG PERRISH HAS HAD A HELL OF A NIGHT. WAKING UP WITH A RAGING HANGOVER AND VAGUE MEMORIES OF GOING OUT AND CURSING GOD, HE GOES TO THE MIRROR AND FINDS HE'S grown horns – real, actual horns sprouting from his temples, which compel everyone he meets in the town of Gideon, New Hampshire to tell him their darkest secrets and hidden desires. These are the same people who are convinced that Ig murdered his girlfriend Merrin (Juno Temple), and they've all got a lot to say. As Ig's world spirals into chaos, he decides to use this infernal gift from the pit to find out the truth about Merrin's death.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that this kind of emotional journey would be tough for an actor, but Daniel Radcliffe, who surprised many by taking on such a dark role, tells us that you'd be wrong. "It was fun," he explains. "I think there's an assumption with actors that we don't want our jobs to be hard, but my job would be the most boring job in the world if I was doing stuffy scenes every day. So when it gets intense and exhausting is also when it gets more fun. It is obviously a very emotionally intense script, but that's what they pay you for, and that's one of the things that I was looking forward to. They are a challenge obviously, but that's why you do the job."

The actor has made consistently interesting choices since bidding goodbye to Harry Potter, with films like *The Woman In Black* and *Kill Your Darlings* showing a willingness to push himself and his abilities. Still, *Horns* does feel like a bit of a leap, but author Joe Hill tells us that we shouldn't be so surprised. "I think largely that people who were familiar with the material thought

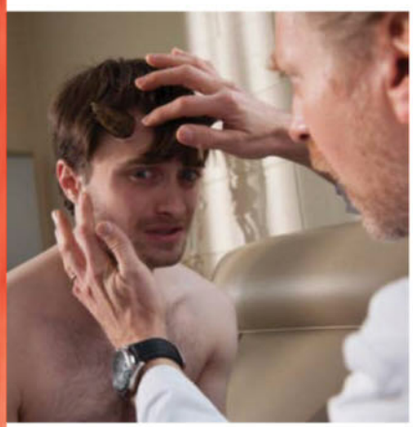
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this would be a great, daring part for him," remembers the author. "I think actors want to move on and have other experiences, play other roles and test their range and find out what they're capable of. In the course of the book, Ig Perrish experiences a huge range of emotions, grief, despair, rage, madness and love, and Daniel Radcliffe was able to bring all those things to the film and make it work beautifully. I always think whenever you see an artist do something difficult and make it look easy, you're seeing someone who's working harder than anyone else, and I think that's great."

Radcliffe aside, *Horns* the movie is a tough sell. It's very dark – often brutally so – but there's a wicked sense of humour running through it that's wound like barbed wire around its raw, bleeding heart. It's exactly that blend that sold Radcliffe on the script almost instantly. "I loved it, I immediately was just obsessed with the script," he enthuses. "I love anything that takes an idea that is somewhat universal and that lots of people relate to and takes just an extraordinary and crazy way into it. The whole world was very grounded in reality apart from this one extraordinary thing that was happening in the middle of it. Then I met Alex the director, and we hit it off. Working with him was one of the best experiences I've had with any director."

'Alex' is Alexandre Aja, the French filmmaker who exploded onto the genre scene with *Switchblade Romance* back in 2003. Since then his career has seen highs (*The Hills Have Eyes*), lows (Kiefer Sutherland haunter *Mirrors*) and blood-drenched silliness (the are-we-even-guilty-about-this guilty pleasure *Piranha 3D*). Excitingly, it looks like *Horns* finds the director back at the top of his game. "He obviously has such a brilliant facility for the gore and slasher-horror and any kind of thriller-tension elements," enthuses Radcliffe. "But also he's French, so he's obviously got a very romantic side to him, and the way he talks about the love story in the film, I just so effortlessly understood what he was talking about. He is also very funny, and it's hard to be funny any time – I imagine it's much harder to be funny in your second language. That's the thing I wanted to make sure of; I found the script really funny, and I wanted to make sure I wasn't reading it wrong, like that was the tone that we're going for, and it absolutely was. That's what I found so impressive about the film and the book, is how all those tones of the horror, the comedy, the tragic romance and the revenge thriller, they all come through, and they never feel like they are clashing with each other."





(Left) Radcliffe on set with director Alexandre Aja; (Right) His character after waking up with the titular horns.

TRUSTING YOUR DIRECTOR IS CERTAINLY VITAL WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH THAT KIND OF BLEND OF TONES. IG DANCES ON THE EDGE OF MADNESS AS HIS DOCTOR tells him that he's on drugs, the local barman reveals he plans to burn down the bar for insurance money, and his parents disclose the kind of brutal truths that no child should ever have to hear. It's brutal and heartrending, but those dark chuckles are key to the fine line that *Horns* walks, as the people Ig meets get to open up and reveal the kind of urges they would never tell anybody in a million years, before acting on them.

"Alex would deliver the same speech about how he wanted [the cast] to react to the horns and the effect that the horns had," Radcliffe explains. "You see them and you are fixated on them, and then you're filled with the kind of joy you would get from totally and unashamedly saying the worst thing in the world. It's an exciting thing and a liberating thing, and the devil in Ig is giving people permission to feel the way they feel and think the way they think, and saying that it's okay, and he always wanted there to be a joy in people's confessions and excitement."

One of the other potentially upsetting side effects that comes from having the devil inside you is that you suddenly become a lot more appealing to snakes. As the film goes on, Ig gets closer and closer to the serpents, which meant that Radcliffe had to learn to love them too. "I got very, very friendly with the snakes towards the end," he remembers. "There was one snake called Princess Leia that was my main snake, and she was called Princess Leia because she was carried around in a *Star Wars* pillowcase for the duration of the film. But she was fantastic, they're amazing creatures. I'm totally projecting human emotions onto them, I know, but I really felt Princess Leia was becoming very affectionate with me towards the end. We did have one scene with 100 live snakes – that was quite impressive. They're really great, they do things on camera that you just think, 'God, we could not train you to do that, and you're doing the coolest thing.'



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At one point in one scene I had a close-up, and she just like, I felt her moving up my body and around my head, and just start wrapping herself around one of my horns, and it's so cool. They're awesome, I'm lucky not to have a massive fear of snakes."

Radcliffe was also lucky enough to have a good example set by the animal experts on set. "They get really cold, so they like being on your body to warm up," he laughs. "There was this snake handler called Piers who would just grab snakes off his van when they got cold and put them up his jumper, and just wait, and after a few minutes you'd start to see them writhing around again underneath, but he was just totally unfazed. It was great."

Although Radcliffe may have responded to the dark charms of *Horns*' blend of tones and the serpentine appeal of his snake co-stars, there does remain the possibility that others will not. Encouragingly, the film definitely has the blessing of the book's author. "I think it came out wonderfully," Hill tells us. "I think that Alexandre Aja and Daniel Radcliffe really delivered, and I especially say that a lot of the triumphs in the film are Daniel Radcliffe's."

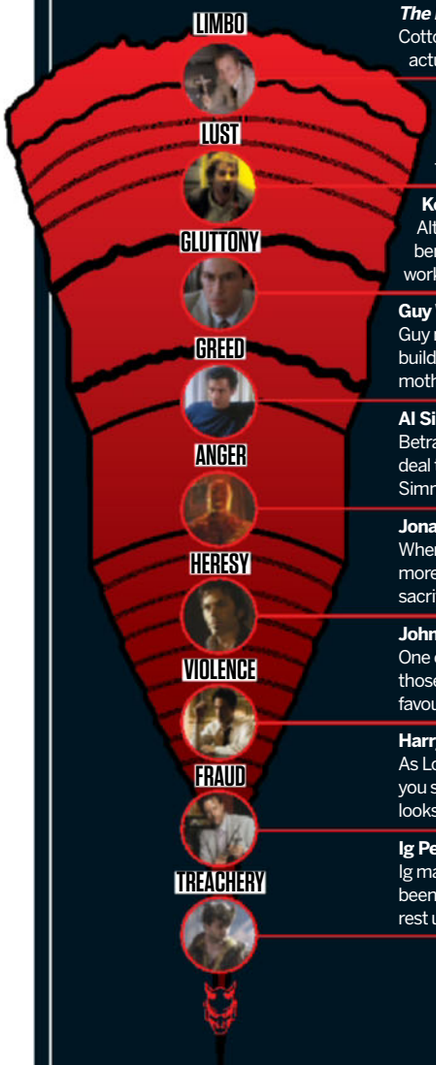
Hill's blessing aside, this won't appeal to everyone, but Radcliffe tells us he wouldn't have it any other way. "Absolutely," he stresses. "I think we wouldn't have made this film right if everyone liked it. Of course, it should be polarising, I loved the script, but I'm sure there were a lot of actors who would have looked at it and gone, 'This is so weird.' But I love it, I think it's so awesome, there are a few really original voices around at the moment, I think Joe is one of them… different friends of mine wrote a musical, and there's a line in it: 'I'd rather be nine people's favourite thing than 100 people's ninth favourite thing.' It's sort of my attitude towards this film, I think people are either going to see it and go, 'What the hell was that?' or 'That's my new favourite movie.' I'd rather be that than something else."

Horns will be released in cinemas on 29 October.



THE NINE CIRCLES OF HELL

If you make a deal with the devil, you've got to pay the price. Here are seven characters who are a little bit closer to the fire than they'd like...



Reverend Cotton Marcus in *The Last Exorcism* (2010)
Cotton's lack of belief makes him unprepared for actually meeting the Horned One.

Jamie Morgan in *Heartless* (2009)
Jamie makes a deal with Papa B to remove his scars. Nothing's free, however, and he is forced to do the Devil's work.

Kevin Lomax in *The Devil's Advocate* (1997)
Although there's no explicitly food-related benefits, Kevin is in it for the all the perks working for the Devil can bring.

Guy Woodhouse in *Rosemary's Baby* (1968)
Guy makes a deal with the cult living in his building to use his unwitting wife Rosemary as a mother for baby Satan. He truly belongs in the pit.

Al Simmons in *Spawn* (1997)
Betrayed by and blown up, Al Simmons accepts a deal to return to Earth. It's a grievous mistake, but Simmons is furious enough to make it.

Jonah King in *Drive Angry* (2011)
When it comes to heresy, it doesn't come much more heinous than kidnapping a baby in order to sacrifice it to the Devil to gain his powers.

John Constantine in *Constantine* (2005)
One of the deepest circles of Hell is reserved for those who take their own life, which everyone's favourite freelance magician/exorcist did.

Harry Angel in *Angel Heart* (1987)
As Louis Cyphre says, "No matter how cleverly you sneak up on a mirror, your reflection always looks you straight in the eye."

Ig Perrish in *Horns* (2014)
Ig may not have committed treachery, but he's been accused of murder, and he's not going to rest until he finds out who did it.

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CORE AND ORDER

BEFORE THE HUNGER PAINS BECAME TOO MUCH, SCIFINOW FLEW TO THE SET OF THE WALKING DEAD TO SEE WHAT – OR WHO – IS ON THE MENU IN SEASON FIVE OF TV'S GRISTLIEST SHOW...

WORDS **JODIE TYLEY**

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IT'S NOT JUST THE ZOMBIES THAT WANT TO DEVOUR YOU ON THE SET OF THE WALKING DEAD. THE DECAYING CADAVERS ARE COMPETING WITH THE HORDES OF RAVENOUS ticks that plague Atlanta, Georgia – home of the hit post-apocalyptic TV show. Now in its fifth season, the cast and crew are fully armed against these bloodsucking paratroopers that will latch onto any inch of exposed flesh. Each night, everyone from the make-up artist to principal cast will have to strip off in front of the mirror to check their entire bodies for ticks. On top of that, there are long hours and extreme humidity to contend with, but you won't catch anyone complaining, least of all the main star Andrew Lincoln.

"We're blessed in this show, because we get to act in this," he says, gesturing to the beautiful forest that surrounds us. "We get eaten by bugs and ticks. It's the real deal, but they're more environments than sets. It's about trying to make it as real as possible. The greatest tonal note I ever got was from [show creator] Frank Darabont. He was talking about the second episode, and said that when Rick jumps off the tank, the first thing that happens is he twists his ankle. That's the show we're in."

Part of this mission of authenticity led to Lincoln tearing into a lump of raw chicken. It was while filming one of the show's most controversial scenes to date, where Rick resorts to mauling a man's throat in order to save not only his life, but that of his son Carl (Chandler Riggs) and friends. The incident was borrowed from Robert Kirkman's long-running comics that the show is based on, but Lincoln was afraid that they had finally gone too far. "I called up [showrunner] Scott Gimple and said, 'We've always been very responsible with violence in our show, but there's a line in the sand, do you think we may be overstepping it?' He didn't think so, and when it played out he was proven right; it made complete sense," he says. "There had been so much wrestling with morality since the death of Shane [Jon Bernthal]. I think this was a key moment where he made peace with that. It was a necessary thing in order to save his son's life and everybody else's lives, and that's who he is. Rick's in a place where he is more competent and more dangerous than he's ever been."

> "I SAID 'THERE'S A LINE IN THE SAND, DO YOU THINK WE MAY BE OVERSTEPPING IT?'"
> ANDREW LINCOLN

This will to survive is what left us with a sense of hope at the end of Season Four, despite Rick and his group being stripped of their weapons and imprisoned inside a railroad car by the Terminus crew. We can only assume that they make a sharp exit, or else the first episode will be very dark indeed. "Yeah, it's just a voiceover!" jokes Lincoln. "It's the most ambitious we've attempted, and because it's not a reboot episode – we don't have to explain where we are – it begins where you left off." But Rick's not the only alpha male inside that confined space; there's also the handlebar-moustachioed Abraham (Michael Cudlitz), who's determined to take Eugene (Josh McDermitt) to Washington and end the pandemic. Can Rick lead this ever-expanding troupe? "Hells to the yeah!" cries Lincoln. "It will be nice to be back with the gun, the boots and the swagger."

Watching his back is the ever-loyal Daryl Dixon, or "the archer", as Terminus leader Gareth (Andrew J West) called him in the Season Four finale. Actor Norman Reedus didn't mind much: "I guess he could have said 'smelly redneck', so it's better than that!" he quips between takes. "I think it says a lot about Gareth's character to give us titles and put us into categories." It's







(Clockwise from bottom left): The main baddies may be humans, but don't expect any let up in the zombie action; Will Glenn step up to the plate this season; Michonne's sisterly/motherly relationship with Carl has provoked much debate.

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unclear what kind of community Gareth is in charge of, but speculation suggests that they are cannibals, luring in fresh meat with the promise of 'sanctuary for all'. He appears to be the latest in a long line of human threats that are outnumbering the walkers. That's not to say we didn't see one on the set, though.

While strolling into the cafeteria, we quickly realise that we've been beaten to it by a hungry walker. He's sat by himself, head hung low under a ton of prosthetics. His neck has been ripped

> "IT'S LIKE REAL LIFE; YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE WITH PEOPLE"
> NORMAN REEDUS

to ribbons and his lips torn clean off, which makes chewing a bit of a chore. Unlike the messy eaters on the show, he's painstakingly prising his new mouth apart in order to insert a morsel of food and avoid destroying four hours' worth of make-up. He looks so lonely that we want to befriend him, but make-up effects supervisor Greg Nicotero has a blanket rule that no one talks to the walkers on set. It's all part of 'keeping it real' when the cameras start to roll.

The last time Daryl came up against an undead mob, it cost him a friend. Beth (Emily Kinney) was bundled into a car by an unknown assailant, and now he's left to ponder her fate. "She's probably at some Urban Outfitters," laughs Reedus. "I think he fears the









(Clockwise from left) Beth and Daryl grew closer last season before being cruelly torn apart; Maggie has emerged as one of the show's strongest characters; and Abraham shares many similarities with his comic-book counterpart.

THE SAMURAI

Danai Gurira on strong women and an even stronger season

What was Michonne thinking when she saw her zombie lookalike?
I think it was a wake-up call to live. She was going back to the old Michonne, walking through fields with pets and no people. She was regressing after the loss of the prison, and it was a do-or-die situation – do I become that chick I was before and not give a shit if I live or die, or do I choose to live? That doppelganger zombie definitely awoke her to realise that actually that is not me, that will never be me, and I will not go the same way as this woman went.

Michonne's quite motherly towards Carl. Do you feel like that in real life?
Some people say motherly, others say big sisterly – there are all sorts of interpretations of that relationship. I love Chandler [Riggs], and definitely when people start to say stuff on set I'm like 'Woah woah woah, Chandler cannot hear that!' He doesn't cuss, he's just a really good kid, but he hears us say all types of things, so I do sometimes try to shield him from things, but he's like, 'Why are you bothering?' I feel a great connection to him, he's a very impressive young man.

Have you formed a special relationship with the katana, the way that Michonne has?
Absolutely. I, Danai, feel very deep loss not being able to pick up my weapon every day. The beauty of Michonne is that she's powerful beyond a weapon, and she can figure out another one. We know that she had to give it up at the end of last season, and the question is, who is she beyond that weapon? The weapon only worked because it was in her hands, so it's very interesting to navigate her without that. It doesn't take away anything from the fact that she's just never going to go down easy.

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THE HUSBAND

Steven Yeun faces up to Glenn's uncertain future

You have a degree in psychology, so who do you think is mentally the strongest character?
I would say someone that's remained consistent has been Daryl; you pick pieces off and learn more about him. In terms of Glenn, I think his moral compass is still sound, but the first deviation from normal Glenn came as soon as he found love. As a young man, finding something to fight for, you don't necessarily take it in your stride the best way; you overshoot or pose in a way you think you're supposed to handle it, but realising that the grace of it is sometimes knowing you have to pull back.

Does knowing what happens to Glenn in the comics affect your performance?
It's such a surprise in the comic that you can't really lead up to it or play it in a certain way. You just have to stay true and make sure you keep this character focused and build him up so that if it happens, it would mean something.

If you had a bucket-list of things Glenn could do, what would be on there?
Ride a motorcycle. I would love to see Glenn take the lead. We've seen bits and pieces so far, but nothing was truer than the first season. I thought that was the first time he really took the lead, and since then he's filled in the gap when the other alpha is missing, but I don't think we've seen him take charge of an entire group – and maybe kill someone with a sword and do what everybody else is doing [laughs].

Are you glad not to be wearing the riot gear anymore?
God yes. It was so hot in that thing. It's also another shedding for Glenn – you shed the old, oversized baggy clothes he used to wear, and now the riot gear, and you see him evolve over time. Maybe he's like a butterfly? No, that's lame.





(Above middle) Carol will have to deal with the fallout of her actions in Season Five.

worst. To stay alive in the world this long you have to be in a large number of people or you have to be a bad person, so the odds are that something bad has happened to her."

The pair became close after being thrown together in the mid-season finale that saw the prison torn apart by the Governor (David Morrissey) and his men. Even after watching her father Hershel (Scott Wilson) beheaded, she kept hope alive and managed to convince a downward-spiralling Daryl to do the same. Fans figured that romance was on the cards, but not if Norman Reedus has anything to do with it: "I've been fighting having any relationship since day one, because once you have it, it's done. He's not the kind of guy who would throw someone up against a tree in the moonlight. I don't want him to be so suave, so if it happens, I want to make it a thing. I don't want to just do it."

But while the internet goes to war over who that lucky lady might be, we suspect that the ones to watch are Rick and Daryl. "What are you hinting at?" Reedus looks suspicious, as we hastily try to backtrack. It turns out we needn't have bothered. "That storyline was actually talked about at one point, very early on. Not with those two characters, but that Daryl may have a tendency to look in this direction and not that direction, and if you call him out on it he'll probably stab you, so he doesn't

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More than ever, in Season Five it's a case of no one being safe.

really understand what's going on. Frank [Darabont] brought that up to me at a party, and I was like 'Go for it, let's do it!' I'm all for twisting people's brains."

Having been created for the TV show, the writers take their inspiration for Daryl from what they see on screen. "Like when Andrea [Laurie Holden] shoots Daryl and Carol [Melissa McBride] leans down to kiss me on the forehead, I flinch like, 'Don't hurt me,' and then it was written in that I was an abused kid. You get opportunities to do things that maybe you wouldn't if you were in the comic-book."

This rich development has made Daryl the fan favourite, which was clear to see when we looked round the Woodbury Shoppe earlier that day. The merchandise-flogging store is located in Senoia, Georgia – where the fictional town of Woodbury was set – and it's packed with clothing emblazoned with slogans like 'Mrs Reedus' and 'If Daryl dies, we riot'. It must give a certain amount of job security in a show that's merciless with its cast. "Can we knock on wood together? Don't even go there!" he says, pounding the table, not taking any chances. "It's like real life; you don't know how much time you have with people. You always think you have more."

But unlike in life, there is always a reason for demise in the world of *The Walking Dead*. Producer Gale Anne Hurd says it's paramount that nothing is done gratuitously: "That's what keeps Scott Gimple and his writers up at night. We don't want to do anything for shock value. People sometimes complain that the show can be a little slow, but we have figured out all the little clues to follow, like with Carol and her journey," she explains. "Many viewers were convinced she couldn't have killed Karen and David, that it must have been the little girls, but that's part of building where we want to get to for the mid-season finale and for the finale. It's not arbitrary."

> "A LOT OF OUR CAST HAS REUNITED, SO WE CAN SEE HOW THAT DYNAMIC HAS CHANGED" GALE ANNE HURD

Incidentally, when we see Melissa McBride, she's every bit as protective as she is on the telly. "Here, have my bug spray!" she kindly offers, clocking our attempts to fend off a swarm of mosquitoes with our bare hands. We can't reveal who she was sharing a scene with mere moments before, but we can't wait to see how it unfolds.

"A lot of our cast has reunited, so we can see how that dynamic has changed," says Hurd. "They've all had experiences from which they have grown, they've all been traumatised to some extent, and now they are in the worst predicament they have been in, because they're locked in a box car." Seeing the survivors corralled into the cart was traumatic for other reasons, too. Anyone who drew parallels to World War II concentration camps was thinking along the right lines: "Being of Jewish ancestry, I don't think you can ever trivialise something like that, but one of the things Greg Nicotero did was make everyone watch documentaries the BBC did about Auschwitz.

"There is very much a connection to the theme we continue to explore

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THE SOLDIER

Abraham star Michael Cudlitz talks facial hair, spoilers and fate

It seems that Abraham will have to defend his belief in Eugene, because Rick's naturally suspicious of people. And that mullet is very suspect...
Science in the front, party at the back!

There seems to be some very questionable fashion sense on *The Walking Dead*, with your crazy facial hair as well. Are you comfortable with that?
Everyone has their look for a specific reason. I think Robert Kirkman is pretty awesome, the way he's structured the world. We project ourselves in a certain way depending on how we want to be perceived, and I think those things haven't changed, even though our ability and assets are limited, but everyone in this world has chosen their style to project a certain persona. Abraham is very aware of how he looks and dresses, and there's intimidation factored into that choice. People aren't going to mess with him.

Is it difficult to keep spoilers a secret?
I've never talked so much about something and not really said anything in my life! We're in a unique situation where within three days the whole world sees the show. I just have to be careful not to say that I kill Daryl in Episode Four, which I would never do [laughs].

Do you look to the comics for his fate?
I asked Scott how my story was going to mirror the comics for back story. and he said no, absolutely read up on it. The back story from an emotional standpoint will be accurate in the sense that he will be coming from the same emotional turmoil – not necessarily the same events – but there will be that wonderfully layered tragedy in his past. But moving forward, all bets are off to the future of the specific characters. You have a world now where Abraham, Tyreese and Daryl all live together, and in the comics Tyreese is dead and Daryl doesn't exist.









(Clockwise from left): Rick's leadership skills will be put to the ultimate test; Norman Reedus gambles with his life with co-executive producer and make-up maestro Greg Nicotero; and Beth's fate has been left up in the air.

of who will you become? That applies not only to our primary cast members, but to the people they encounter. Once you've been pushed to a point that you find yourself capable of doing things you never thought you would be capable of, can you maintain your humanity? What are you willing to do to survive, and is there anything you won't do?"

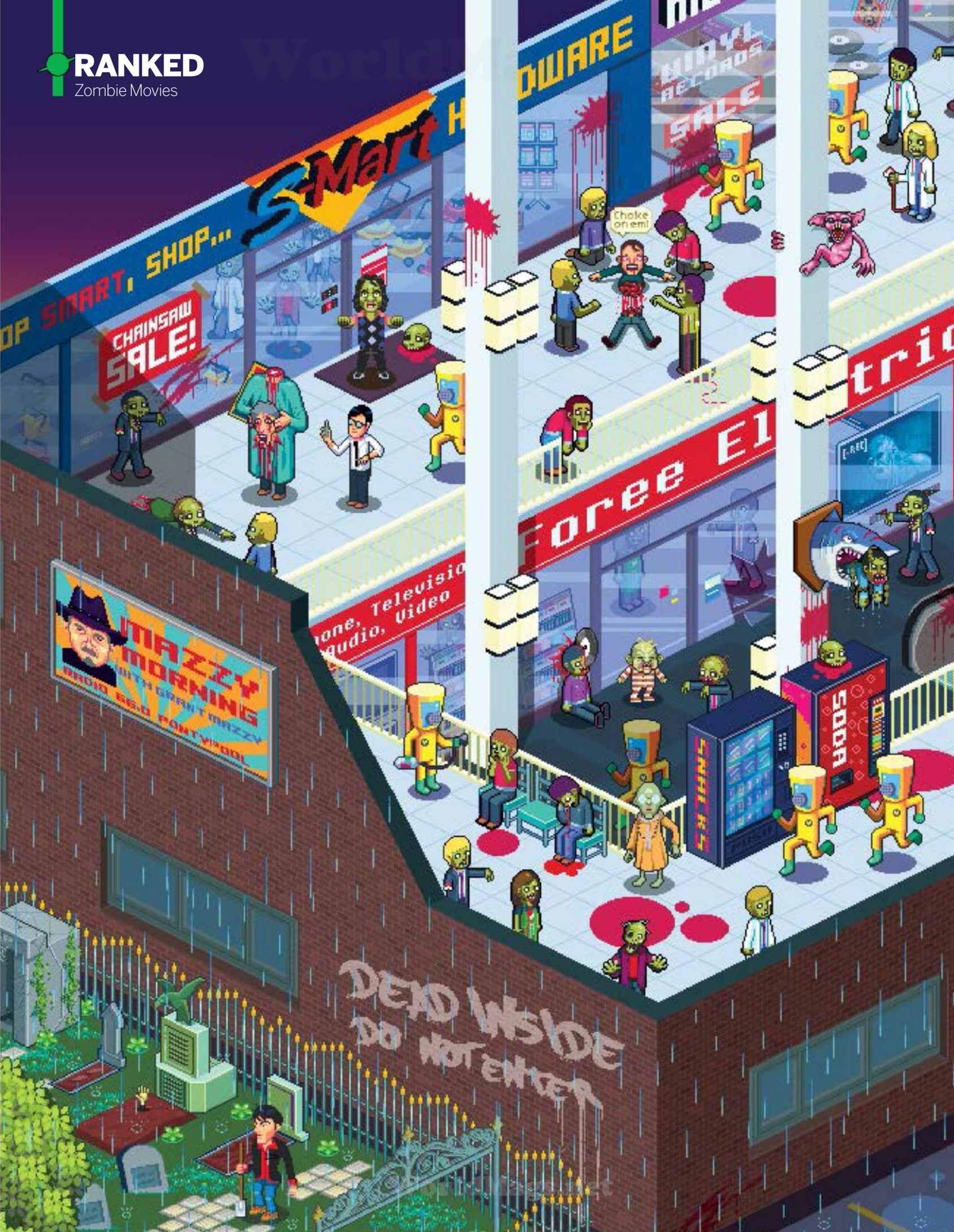
In the Season Five trailer, it looks like the Terminus gang will resort to extreme measures. There's even speculation that this isn't even Gareth's doing, and is in fact down to comic-book villain Negan. Hurd says it's a question of when he'll appear, not if: "Robert Kirkman's always said at some point he will appear. As to when – well, that wouldn't be any fun if we told you," she teases. "But he is such an important character that we have to bring him to life at some point. Every season there will be characters from the comic-book, but not necessarily in the chronological order they appear.

"We expanded the period of time Shane was on the show because [actor] Jon [Bernthal] was so fantastic, and the love triangle was so compelling that we wanted to give it a longer arc. And then there are times when even when we have great actors, like Sophia [Madison Lintz], that was a very important lesson in Carol's character growth. It's very difficult for all of us to say goodbye to someone. It's like going to war when you're in these gruelling circumstances, and you don't want to lose anybody."

It seems that tick checks and perpetual perspiration breed solidarity. "No one has changed from the first season to the fifth season. No one thinks they're too good for the little zombie show," she continues. "It could be very different; there could have been people that wished they had never signed, which you get with a lot of shows, and you see it in their performances, so we're blessed. We have the best fans in the world, we love and respect them, and we know that we do it for them. We're not here just to get awards; we're here to make sure that the fans – who are counting the days until we're on the air again – feel that the wait was worthwhile."

The Walking Dead Season Five begins on 13 October on FOX.

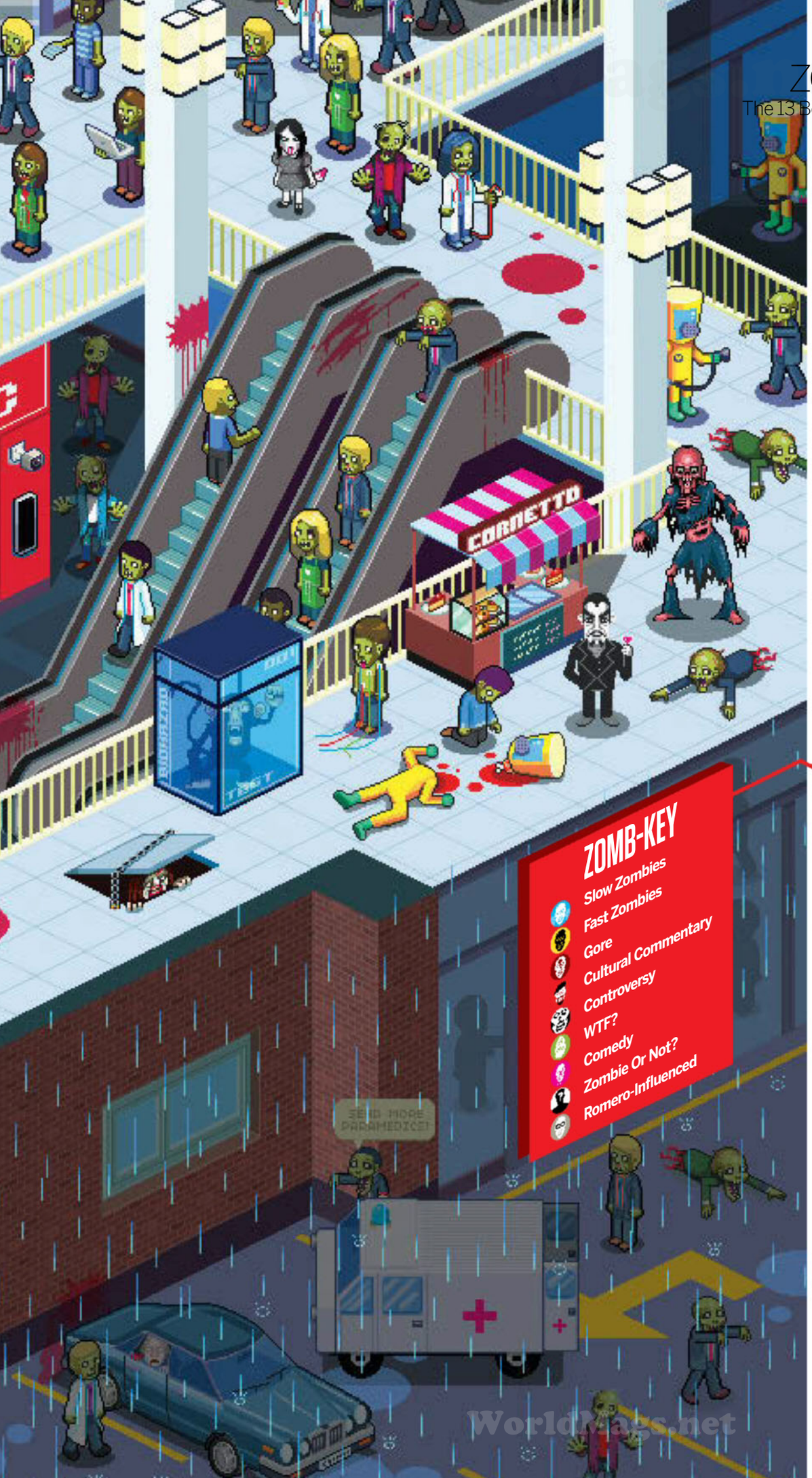
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S-Mart
CHAINSAW SALE!
Choke on em!
SODAS
SNACKS
DEAD INSIDE
DO NOT ENTER

THE 13 BEST ZOMBIE MOVIES OF ALL TIME

FROM ROMERO TO WRIGHT, HERE ARE THE 13 FINEST MOVIES TO BRING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**
ILLUSTRATION **ARMY OF TROLLS**





1. DAWN OF THE DEAD (1978)

Director: George A Romero
Stars: Ken Foree, Gaylen Ross, Scott H Reiniger, David Emge

George Romero's sequel remains the pinnacle of the zombie movie. Following the huge success of *Night Of The Living Dead*, Romero put off making a sequel until he had an idea that he thought could match its success. He found his perfect subject in the Monroeville Mall, so complete a haven for shoppers that they would never have to leave. It's here that our four heroes head to, swiftly followed by the mindless monsters that are acting almost entirely on sense memory. "They're after the place," intones Peter (Ken Foree). "They don't know why; they just remember. Remember that they want to be in here."

Dawn Of The Dead also showcased Romero's growing confidence with big set pieces; it doesn't have the slightly distancing harsh cynicism of *Day Of The Dead*, and Foree is fantastic as the effortlessly cool Peter. Finally, let's not forget that brilliant finale, where Peter considers staying behind to meet his maker before changing his mind and running for the chopper. The best zombie movie ever made? We certainly think so.



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2. DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE (1994)

Director: Michele Soavi
Stars: Rupert Everett, François Hadji-Lozaro, Anna Falchi

Rupert Everett plays Francesco Dellamorte, a dapper and disaffected gravedigger who spends his nights killing the dead that he buried during the day. His relatively simple life with his simple friend Gnaghi (François Hadji-Lozaro) is complicated when they both fall for women – or in Gnaghi's case, just a head. When the object of Francesco's affections is killed by the risen corpse of her dead husband as they make love on his tomb (it's complicated) and resurrected, the cemetery man has to do his job.

Dellamorte Dellamore is beautifully shot by Michele Soavi; a strange, dream-like horror romance with its own strange sense of humour. It truly defies categorisation.



3. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

Director: George A Romero
Stars: Duane Jones, Judith O'Dea, Karl Hardman, Marilyn Eastman

Made on a shoestring, this black-and-white classic is truly iconic, but hasn't lost any of its power to shock. From the opening cemetery scene to the final, brutal gunshot, *Night Of The Living Dead* doesn't pull any punches.

The parallels with the cultural struggles at the time have not become any less powerful, as Ben (Duane Jones) goes head to head with the loudmouth Harry Cooper (Karl Hardman). The zombies are still every bit as chilling; no filmmaker has exploited that shuffling but untiring menace as expertly as Romero, and few filmmakers have delivered as powerful a finale, as the Sheriff's posse callously put a bullet through Ben's head. "That's another one for the fire."



4. PONTYPOOL (2008)

Director: Bruce McDonald
Stars: Stephen McHattie, Lisa Houle, Georgina Reilly

Starring Stephen McHattie as a misanthropic radio DJ confronted with a terrifying virus, the zombies of Pontypool are infected by words rather than bites, turning into violent, senseless killers.

The film's ingenious conceit allows McDonald to make the most of his single location, as the radio station comes under siege and Mazzy, his producer Sydney (Lisa Houle) and their returned veteran intern Laurel-Anne (Georgina Reilly) try to figure out how they can avoid infection. As words are repeated and become dangerous the tension is ratcheted up, and McHattie delivers a compelling turn. "You have to stop understanding! Stop understanding what you are saying!"



5. [REC] (2007)

Directors: Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza
Stars: Manuela Velasco, Ferran Terraza, Jorge-Yamam Serrano, Pablo Rosso

Directors Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza used found footage to put the viewer right alongside plucky reporter Angela Vidal (Manuela Velasco) as she follows a fire crew into an apartment block to answer a call about an elderly woman in distress. Naturally, said pensioner is not only a zombie; she's also a sprinter.

Balagueró and Plaza utilise their claustrophobic setting to create a tense and unbearably jump-inducing horror flick. Despite ditching the lumbering slow-walkers of Romero, his spirit can clearly be seen. The sequels are entertaining, but none (so far) have matched this first film for sheer nail-biting terror.





6. ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS (1979)

Director: Lucio Fulci
Stars: Tisa Farrow, Ian McCulloch, Richard Johnson, Al Cliver

Lucio Fulci's movie occupies a place in our hearts for being both hugely entertaining – as the occupants of a small tropical island try to deal with a zombie outbreak – and for having a ton of great stories surrounding its production and release.

Like the best of Fulci's work, the gore is outrageous and inventive, but hearing how a stuntman really did confront a shark (it was loaded with sedatives and horse meat) and how the distributors tried to associate it with Romero (it was called *Zombie 2* in the hopes of tricking people into thinking it was part of a series), *Zombie Flesh Eaters* has all the charms of the best of the scrappy but hugely entertaining Italian bloodfests.



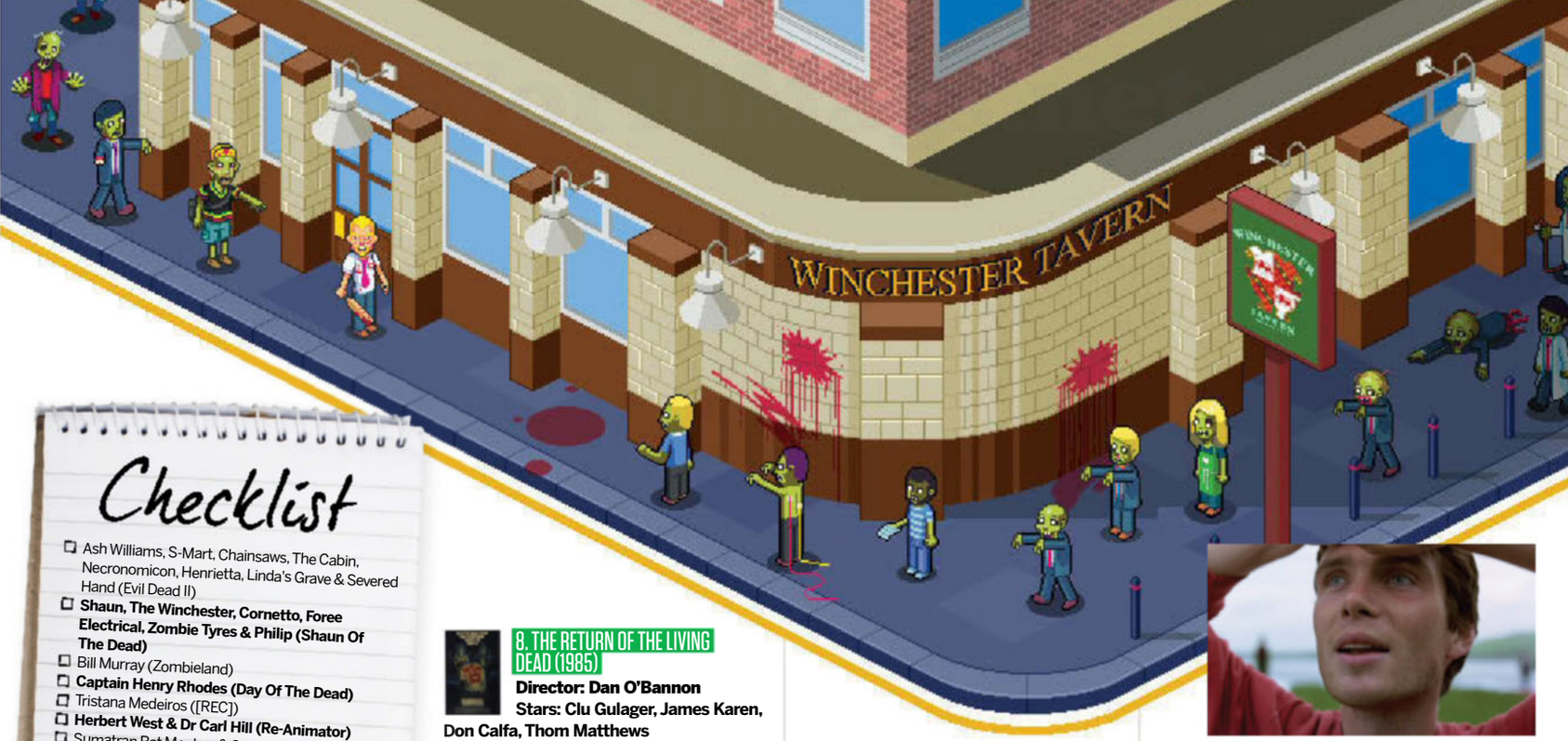
7. BRAINDEAD (1992)

Director: Peter Jackson
Stars: Timothy Balme, Diana Peñalver, Elizabeth Moody

Following the messy but fun *Bad Taste* and the utterly batshit *Meet The Feebles*, Peter Jackson created his crowning horror achievement in the hilarious and blood-drenched *Braindead.* As the put-upon Lionel (Timothy Balme) tries to escape his awful mother, a Sumatran rat-monkey throws a spanner in the works.

Jackson indulges his love of gross-out gore (ear in the custard) and the laughs stack up as quickly as the bodies. The final sequence is rightly remembered as one of the most insanely gory put to film, but we'll never forget kung-fu priest Father McGruder (Stuart Devenie) and his awesome pronouncement: "I kick arse for the Lord!

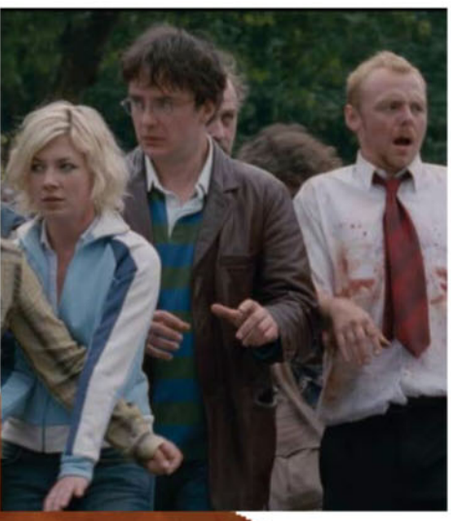
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Checklist

- ☐ Ash Williams, S-Mart, Chainsaws, The Cabin, Necronomicon, Henrietta, Linda's Grave & Severed Hand (Evil Dead II)
- ☐ **Shaun, The Winchester, Cornetto, Foree Electrical, Zombie Tyres & Philip (Shaun Of The Dead)**
- ☐ Bill Murray (Zombieland)
- ☐ **Captain Henry Rhodes (Day Of The Dead)**
- ☐ Tristana Medeiros ([REC])
- ☐ **Herbert West & Dr Carl Hill (Re-Animator)**
- ☐ Sumatran Rat Monkey & Selwyn (Braindead)
- ☐ **Murder Legendre (White Zombie)**
- ☐ Karen Cooper (Night Of The Living Dead)
- ☐ **Tarman & Ambulance (Return Of the Living Dead)**
- ☐ Rage Monkey (28 Days Later)
- ☐ **Zombie Vs Shark (Zombie Flesh Eaters)**
- ☐ Francesco Dellamorte & Cemetary (Dellamorte Dellamore)
- ☐ **Grant Mazzy (Pontypool)**
- ☐ Zombie Hare Khrisna & The Mall (Dawn Of The Dead)





8. THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (1985)

Director: Dan O'Bannon
Stars: Clu Gulager, James Karen, Don Calfa, Thom Matthews

Springing from the novel by *Night Of The Living Dead* co-writer John Russo, Dan O'Bannon's *Return Of The Living Dead* takes a very different path to Romero's movies, instead embracing the schlocky potential of a zombie outbreak. A group of punks break into a mortuary where the toxic substance that caused the events of *Night* is being stored. Of course, the gas is accidentally unleashed, and the bloodbath begins.

Comparing the *Return* movies with their Romero counterparts is essentially a pointless exercise, as they're interested in very different things. O'Bannon's self-aware humour and love of schlock makes *Return* hugely entertaining, while the talking zombies give the film some decidedly choice dialogue: "Send... more... paramedics," the undead instruct the hapless emergency services, and the never-ending stream of brains to be eaten makes this unmissable. We'd also recommend Brian Yuzna's *Return Of The Living Dead: Part III*, which has absolutely no right to be as good as it is.



9. SHAUN OF THE DEAD (2004)

Director: Edgar Wright
Stars: Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Kate Ashfield, Dylan Moran

When the grandfather of the zombie sub-genre picks out a film as his favourite homage, who are we to disagree? Indeed, Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg's modern classic is every bit as sharp and funny as it was when it was released ten years ago. It's not just about the obvious love the duo have for Romero's movies. No, *Shaun* succeeds because the filmmakers found a way to mesh nostalgia with their own distinct style.

Wright's work on *Shaun* is stunning, and shows the kind of confidence behind the camera that has dazzled us since *Spaced*, while the comic partnership of Pegg and Nick Frost is an absolute joy. Crucially, Pegg and Wright never lose sight of the people going through this zombie nightmare, and *Shaun*'s big beating heart is as important as its wit and references.



10. 28 DAYS LATER (2002)

Director: Danny Boyle
Stars: Cillian Murphy, Naomie Harris, Brendan Gleeson, Christopher Eccleston

The endless debate about whether running zombies are actually zombies began with *28 Days Later*. Leaving aside that issue for the moment (although we have technically given our opinion by including it), the film was arguably the most significant catalyst for the zombie genre's Noughties revival.

Alex Garland's script roots the wider horrors in personal tragedy (the 'Don't wake up' note still chokes us up) and the strong cast give us a group to root for. While the final act is slightly disappointing, *28 Days Later* pins the viewer to their seat, and those opening shots of Jim (Cillian Murphy) wandering the empty streets of London ensure its iconic status. From Zack Snyder's *Dawn Of The Dead* to Marc Forster's *World War Z*, this has left its mark.



11. EVIL DEAD II (1987)

Director: Sam Raimi
Stars: Bruce Campbell, Sarah Berry, Dan Hicks, Kassie Wesley

Purists may argue that Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* trilogy aren't technically zombie movies, but we would counter with "why would you want to start an argument about Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* trilogy?" Following the critical and commercial failure of their comedy *Crimewave*, Raimi, Rob Tapert and Bruce Campbell went back to the well with more cash and greater determination.

What followed is cinema history, as Campbell's Ash is confronted with the Deadite menace at the remote cabin, is betrayed by his own hand, and kits himself out with a chainsaw hand ("Groovy") before taking on the forces of the Necronomicon. Not only is it hilarious and gory, but Raimi unleashes such a ferocious energy behind the camera that every film he's made since is judged by *Evil Dead II*'s high standards.



12. WHITE ZOMBIE (1932)

Director: Victor Halperin
Starring: Bela Lugosi, Madge Bellamy, Joseph Cawthorn

Before Romero started tearing the innards out of their heroes, Victor Halperin terrified audiences with his pre-Hays Code tale of Machiavellian madness and Voodoo. Bela Lugosi stars as 'Murder' Legendre, who agrees to help a wealthy plantation owner win the lovely Madeline (Madge Bellamy) away from her fiancé. Naturally, the only way to do this is to turn Madleine into a zombie, which he quickly regrets.

Although it's credited as the first zombie movie, *White Zombie* doesn't feature the same undead creatures we know today, instead drawing on the Voodoo ritual of creating a trance-like state that resembles living death. Wes Craven would later explore this in *The Serpent And The Rainbow*, but *White Zombie* remains a gloriously atmospheric and ghoulish landmark.



13. RE-ANIMATOR (1985)

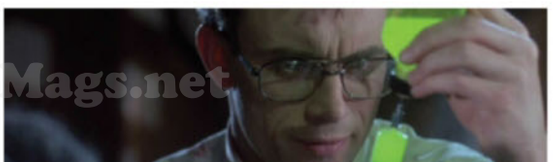
Director: Stuart Gordon
Stars: Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton

Few midnight movies have reached the same giddy heights as *Re-Animator*. Loosely adapting the HP Lovecraft story, Stuart Gordon created an inventive, hilarious and totally insane horror that is endlessly rewatchable. Jeffrey Combs slays as Doctor Herbert West, a brilliant and driven medical student who has created a serum that can bring the dead back to life. As he and Dr Dan Cain (Bruce Abbott) go about finding the perfect subject, their failures come back to tear them apart.

With brilliant practical effects, a keen sense of self-aware wit and a cast who are game for anything, *Re-Animator* remains a high watermark far above its schlocky imitators. If you're not laughing or hurling by the berserk mortuary finale, you may not be breathing.







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THE BOOK OF LIFE LOOKS LIKE THE CREEPIEST ANIMATED LOVE STORY SINCE THE CORPSE BRIDE. WE GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH DIRECTOR JORGE GUTIERREZ, PRODUCER GUILLERMO DEL TORO AND THE CAST AND CREW...

WORDS **JOE NAZZARO**



IF FILMMAKER JORGE GUTIERREZ WINS ANY AWARDS FOR HIS DEBUT FEATURE THE BOOK OF LIFE, DON'T BE SURPRISED TO SEE A FEW EMPTY seats in the front row – or seemingly empty, that is. The Mexican-born writer/director, who brings his cultural and family folk tales to life in the new animated film from Reel FX Creative Studios and 20th Century Fox Animation, not only believes his now-departed friends and relatives are still close by; he even held his wedding on Day of the Dead – Día de Muertos – just so they could share in his good fortune.

"I had a friend who passed away when I was a kid," explains Gutierrez, who uses the Latin American holiday as a backdrop, "and that's when my parents sat me down and said, 'Your friend is still here with you as long as you tell his story and his jokes, and you talk about him,' so as I grew up, it became a big deal to me.

"When I met Sandra, the girl of my dreams [who designed all the female characters in *The Book Of Life*], I proposed to her just two weeks after I met her, and she said no. Back then, I thought if my friend had been by my side, she would have said yes, so eight years went by, and on the Day of the Dead, I went to Sandra's house and I felt he was there with me, so I proposed again, and she said yes. I wanted him to be the best man at my wedding, so I went around to all the priests in Tijuana, where I was living at the time, and said I wanted to get married on the Day of the Dead, and they all said no; the holiday wasn't for weddings.

"I finally went to the main cardinal in Tijuana, a big, giant guy, who said, 'I'm not going to marry you, but humour me: why do you want to get married on that day?' I told him I wanted my best friend to be my best man, and my family and Sandra's family – who had passed away – to come to our wedding. I wanted all the generations to come to the wedding (which is something that is in the movie), and this giant cardinal said, 'OK, I'll marry you', so we had our big Day of the Dead wedding."

Told from the perspective of Mary Beth, a museum guide (voiced by Christina Applegate) telling a story to a group of rowdy schoolgirls, *The Book Of Life* follows the adventures of Manolo (Diego Luna), a young bullfighter caught between living up to the expectations of his family and following his own dream as a musician. Manolo and his childhood friend Joaquin (Channing Tatum) vie for the affections of Maria (Zoe Saldana), which attracts the attention of the gods, La Muerte (Kate del Castillo) and Xibalba (Ron Perlman), who make a wager on which man Maria will ultimately choose. But making a bet with the god of mischief is never a straightforward transaction, and Manolo ends up in the Land of the Remembered, where he must make his way back to Maria and the Land of the Living.

We're in Dallas, the Texas headquarters of Reel FX, where Gutierrez is overseeing the final weeks of post-production on *The Book Of Life*. Despite the obvious deadline pressures, the filmmaker and key members of his production team have set the day aside to show off parts of the nearly finished feature.

"Stylistically, this movie looks like nothing you've ever seen before," promises the director. "It's very much a love letter to Latin American folk art, where each piece is completely different and unique, and you can feel the soul of the artist in that piece. The movie also drips with the symbolism and iconography of Mexico and Latin American, but my big inspiration was Day of the Dead, which is full of joy and colour and happiness, so that is what we are celebrating.

"Guillermo del Toro is the producer, and he's been incredibly nurturing, taking me under his wing. He jokes that I am his love child without the love, but he's always protected the movie and understood how unique it was. He's been a great champion of the film, so I cannot be more thankful for how much Guillermo has helped us."

Unlike most of today's digitally animated films, which can take a small army and the better part of a decade to produce, *The Book Of Life* has worked with considerably less. "We did roughly a year of pre-production," notes Gutierrez, "and a year and a half of production, which is maybe half of what a regular animated big studio movie would have, but less time allowed us to be more creative and daring with some of our choices. Being a young, lean studio really created an atmosphere that we were the 'town', and the 'bandits'



The voice of Maria will be provided by Zoe Saldana.

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THE BOOK OF SYMBOLISM

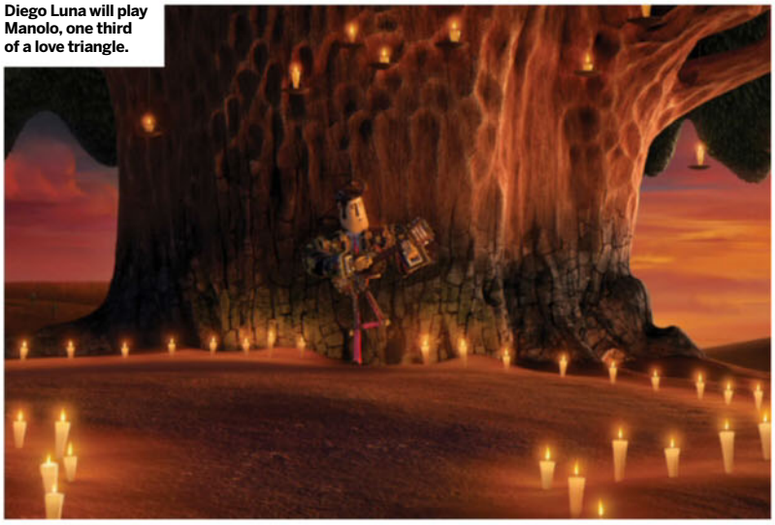
Decoding the secret messages in the film's colour palette

Ask anybody who worked on *The Book Of Life*, and they will tell you that you'll have to see the film several times to pick up on all the symbolism. "The only cold colour on Muerte is the blue in her eyes," notes Gutierrez, "The only warm colour on Xibalba is the red in his eyes. Red is La Muerta's colour, and blue is Xibalba's colour, so they only have eyes for each other.

"Manolo wears a black suit with red, while Joachin has red, but if you look at Maria, she has a zero blue on her, so she's leaning towards the colours of Manolo. None of the bandits have happy colours. The only colour they have is red, but Manolo is a bullfighter, and red makes bulls angry, so those are angry things that are coming for him.

"Manolo's family is full of different colours; again, the idea that these are different flavours of the same dish, so Manolo has evolved from them... getting taller and skinnier, so he is refining the machismo.

"He has a heart on his sleeve, and the guitar has a cross and skulls, and it was given to him by Maria when he was a little boy, so when he grew, he themed the whole outfit through the guitar, so he is themed to Maria. All of these things have a story. We never explain them in the movie, but they're all there for a reason."



Diego Luna will play Manolo, one third of a love triangle.

were the schedule and budget, so we knew if we worked together we might survive, and we did."

A graduate of the CalArts animation/film school, Gutierrez made his thesis film about the Day of the Dead, winning a student Emmy and seeing his film go to the Cannes Film Festival. When an agent suggested he write a feature-length screenplay inspired by the short, as well as his family history, Gutierrez bought a book on screenplay-writing and wrote what turned out to be "the worst screenplay you've ever read!

"I pitched that script to pretty much every studio in town, and they all laughed at me: 'You're just a kid out of school; no one wants to see a movie about this stuff! We're looking for talking-animal movies, and none of the animals in your movie talk!' so it wasn't something they wanted to make.

DESPITE THAT SETBACK, GUTIERREZ CONTINUED TO WORK IN THE INDUSTRY AS A WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

and character designer. But it was his Nickelodeon cartoon series *El Tigre: The Adventures Of Manny Rivera*, about a 13-year-old Mexican superhero, that started getting attention, and the doors that had previously been closed began creaking open again. "At that point, producer Brad Booker, who I had known for many years, said, 'Hey, Reel FX is ready to start making original movies!' I had bad experiences with the studios, so I decided to go somewhere where they would let us do something different, so I came here and we started developing the movie. At that point they said, 'Who would be your dream producer?' and like all young Mexican filmmakers I yelled 'Guillermo del Toro!' at the top of my lungs. Like Batman, we turned on the del Toro sign, and he showed up."

Gutierrez is exaggerating, of course. At the time, del Toro was still in New Zealand working on *The Hobbit* trilogy, but after getting news that he would be returning, Gutierrez and his team scrambled to put together a presentation. For three months, del Toro kept rescheduling their meeting until an invitation came through to pitch the project at del Toro's home.

"It was like 110 degrees," remembers Gutierrez, "and his house was so full of artwork that I said, 'We can't put up our artwork because it's going to blend in; let's pitch to him outside!' So we took all the beautiful paintings and maquettes that Paul Sullivan the art director, Simon [Varela, production designer], Sandra and I did, and we went outside by the pool, where there was a life-sized statue of Ray Harryhausen. It felt like the statue was judging me the whole time."

The pitch meeting was originally scheduled for 20 minutes, but del Toro wanted to hear it in five. "We were both sweating, and just as I was about to say what the movie was about, there were suddenly three lawnmower guys at the house next door, all at the same time! It was super-loud, but Guillermo said, 'Just yell it to me,' so I started yelling, 'and there's this really romantic moment...' and Brad was holding me so I didn't fall in the pool. I was red and sweaty, and I think I had heatstroke; it was the worst pitch in the history of pitches.

"So we finished and went back in the house, and Guillermo said, 'That was

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The Book Of Life **is a Latin love story with a supernatural flavour.**

a terrible pitch, but there's something amazing there. I have two daughters, and we would get up on Saturday morning to watch *El Tigre*, so I know your style and sense of humour, and of course I want to produce your first movie!' At that point he said, 'I want to make sure the script is really good,' so I ran out to my car where I had the script in my trunk, where a tequila bottle had broken and spilled into the script, so it smelled like tequila, but I handed it to him. It took Guillermo something like two months to get back to us, and just when we were losing hope, he called and said, 'I'm in!'

Gutierrez enlisted production designer Simon Varela, who in turn brought in Paul Sullivan as art director. "Simon sent a rough drawing to Paul, and two days later I was sitting in my apartment with a cup of coffee, when my computer said, 'Paul Sullivan image,' so I clicked on it, and I was like [The director mimes a spit take]. I remember saying to Simon, 'Who is this guy?' I just couldn't grasp how he could have grasped our universe, the colours and the vibrancy of the world so quickly. From that point forward, we started developing the look of the movie."

Varela, who prefers working in old school charcoal rather than a computer, created a series of black-and-white concept drawings that were handed off to Sullivan to turn into 3D colour versions. "I did a drawing of the town," recalls Varela, "that was based on different towns in Latin America, and while I was working on it, I had artists coming in from Peru, Mexico and El Salvador; they all said, 'I know a town that looks exactly like that!' You can see the buildings

Director Jorge Gutierrez (left) and production designer Simon Varela (right) at Reel FX in Texas.





Reel FX Creative Studios also worked on *Free Birds* and *Cirque Du Soleil: Worlds Away*.



PRODUCING THE BOOK OF LIFE

Guillermo del Toro on bringing the Book to life

As noted elsewhere, Jorge Gutierrez's number one choice to produce *The Book Of Life* was Guillermo del Toro. "He calls me 'Gordito'," the director confides. "He says, 'You remind me of me many pounds ago!'"

"I've produced a lot of first-time directors," notes del Toro, "so it was important to protect the livelihood of Jorge and the vision he had. When I saw the first few images, I knew we had something unique, and that it was about celebrating the fact that with Mexico... but we also wanted to celebrate the international essence of Mexico. Mexicans are shaped as much by world music or Bruce Lee movies as we are by things that folkloric, so we wanted to make the movie eminently modern, but steeped in our roots, and celebrate what Day of the Dead is about; celebrating life and those that came before. So I saw Jorge (and I saw myself a few pounds earlier), and I said, 'I've got to protect this fat bastard!' I love him, and I think he's a true new voice in the image creation of film."

"I think film is a banquet," del Toro continues, "and to bring something that truly resonates with anyone trying to experience a new food, you need to bring something that is specific to you. In order to be universal, we tried to be specific to our culture, who we are and what we love, and I think I would answer that everybody involved in the movie is what's new. None of us are trying to cash in on a back-lit CGI movie about talking animals, with a hit soundtrack and them skateboarding and quipping one-liners. It's something else; it's fresh, daring and beautiful, like the heart of Jorge, which is full of cholesterol and art!"

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THE VOICES OF LIFE

CHRISTINA APPLEGATE (MARY BETH)



"I like doing voiceovers, because I don't have to wear make-up, and I don't have to shower! For me, I like the process of going in and doing this blind, and having to imagine this person in your mind, the way they move, the way they carry themselves and how their mouth moves, because you haven't seen any of it. You don't know what it looks like yet, and when you finally get to go in a few months later to do some more dialogue and it comes to life, it's quite a magical moment."

CHANNING TATUM (MANOLO)



"I've never worked on an animated movie before. I did a little part in *The LEGO Movie*, but that was basically me and Jonah Hill going in for an hour and making fun of each other, so that was easy, but coming in and sitting with Jorge, who's got such energy and life, it's like working with a net: you physically can't do anything wrong."

RON PERLMAN (XIBALBA)



"I've always loved voice work, because it's an invitation to come in and give a full-blown performance, so you're working on an incredibly instinctive level. You're going for the brass ring immediately, so it's very final. It's pure performance for performance sake, and if you go horribly wrong, you'll be pulled back, so there are lots of checks and balances, but you're really asked to go for it in a big way.

"When I did my first movie with Guillermo in 1991, I was introduced to the concept of the Day of the Dead. Aside from the myriad things you can take away when someone describes to you why there is a Day of the Dead, why there's a culture that has invented this pagan ritual and how charming it is... for me, we live in a culture where death is an enemy. It's feared; it's something you run from, but this was a beautiful relationship of the living to the dead, where you make friends with it and understand that it is part of this continuum, so you de-mystify and celebrate it in a way that brings beauty to it... to be able to be part of a film that's going to introduce that to kids in America, who will probably never be introduced to it otherwise, that's dazzling!'"

leaning against each other, like people leaning against each other to survive."

Sullivan's job was to help Varela and Gutierrez create the final look, as well as establish the overall look, colour palette and symbolism for the different 'worlds' seen in the film. "We start with our three main realms," he elaborates, "which are the Land of the Living, the Land of the Remembered and the Land of the Forgotten. The Land of the Living is strongly represented by square shapes, and everything is lived-in and aged. The colour palette is a homage to Sergio Leone and spaghetti Western films, so everything is kind of sepia-toned.

"When we get to the Land of the Remembered, everything is much more colourful and vibrant, and when we go to the Land of the Forgotten, everything is triangle shapes and devoid of colour; the antithesis of the Land of the Remembered, where everything is represented by round shapes and conglomerates of round shapes, with really vibrant, happy colours."

"If you look at our characters," adds Gutierrez, "Manolo and Joaquin are very blocky, so they are all squares, while Maria is all round, all circles everywhere, and Xibalba is all triangles. These shapes are throughout the film, and the idea is that roundness can't hurt you. It's always rolling, always moving, and it's a happy thing. The square is a little stubborn. It doesn't move and it's very solid, while the triangle obviously hurts you, because it's pointy."

FINDING A WAY TO ANIMATE WOODEN-LOOKING CHARACTERS THAT WERE BASED ON BASIC GEOMETRIC SHAPES PROVED TO be more difficult. According to animation supervisor Wes Mandell, "Some of them had very square arms, which aren't very easy to move, so we had a lot of meetings to figure out how to do it. We finally had a meeting a year and a half ago, which we like to call the 'magical meeting,' where we sat around Henry the modeller's desk, and he was pushing things around on his screen, and the rest of us were pointing at it and saying, 'Do this! No, do this!'

"Because Monolo is made of wood, he's got to be able to flex his shoulders without looking like rubber, so what we did was put in 'cuts' where we needed to move things around. Paul did a schematic of the mechanics of Manolo, and it was a 'Eureka' moment for us. It allowed us to maintain the integrity of the design while reinforcing the idea of how it could be made."

"It's not like you could say, 'Oh, wooden Mexican folk art puppets,'" agrees Gutierrez, "Let's get that software!'"

"But once we figured out the mechanics for that one character," adds Sullivan, "It set the template for everybody else."

Finding the right voiceover actors to play those characters was a process of give and take. If the character could land a 'name' actor like Channing Tatum, it allowed him to bring in lesser-known indie actors in other roles. "With Diego, I wrote the role for him," declares Gutierrez. "I didn't know if he could sing, but I specifically wanted him to sing, because I didn't want the singing in the movie – especially for the main characters – to sound like overly produced Broadway singing. I wanted it to sound like a real guy who grabbed a guitar and went to sing for his girl; really human, really organic.

"After Diego said yes, we started about chemistry. I love that Diego and Zoe fell in love but never spoke in the Spielberg movie *The Terminal*, so they already knew each other and I knew they had chemistry, and when we recorded them together, it was kind of a reunion. Zoe is Puerto Rican/Dominican, so she understood the culture really well, and brought all this fire and feistiness to her role.

"I knew Joaquin needed to be the voice of the hero; a really big presence, someone everyone would say, 'That's a hero!' I never thought Channing would say yes, but we went to Chicago, where he was shooting *Jupiter Ascending*, and pitched it to him in his hotel room, and he got behind the idea.

"At the end of our pitch, he said, 'Jorge, you know I'm not Mexican right?' I said,

Channing Tatum's Joaquin completes the roster of the core trio.



All headshots ©Gage Skidmore

Reel FX proudly shows off art from *The Book Of Life* in the lobby.



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WAITING FOR THE PERFECT TUNE

How Jorge Gutierrez went the extra mile to get his soundtrack

While Gutierrez was mostly successful in securing songs for his film's soundtrack, there was one tune that eluded him. "The Mumford & Sons song *I Will Wait* is about faith," he relates, "so when I asked the band, 'Can I use this song to express a character waiting for Maria?' the band said, 'No, the song is not about loving another human being… It's about faith, but we will offer you another song that hasn't been released.' "We listened to the other song, and it was beautiful, but it didn't work the way *I Will Wait* worked… so we hired a mariachi band stand to behind me, and shot an iPhone video of me begging the band. I said, 'I understand this song is about faith, but you guys as artists should know that once you release a song, the audience will make the song into whatever they want. "So when I heard your song, I heard it as a love song… Love is about faith, so if you guys love the children of Mexico, you will let us use your song!' This was on a Thursday that we sent it out, and by Saturday the band said, 'Okay, you can use the song!'

'No, but you're going to be Captain Latin America! You're going to have the swagger of Argentina, the smoothness of Brazil, the machismo of Mexico; you're going to be every country in one!' and he really got behind that. He loved the idea that he could make fun of that persona that other people see him in, so that's how it grew.

"The same thing with Ice Cube, who plays the Candle Maker. He had never done a role like that, but he was playing a god, and Ice Cube is a god of hip-hop, so that's how I pitched him the role. When he showed up, he looked at the stuff and said, 'How do I fit into this world?' and I told him that Mexico and Latin America have this history of outlaws, rebels, surfers and cowboys, who left the US and went to Latin America and found their souls, and that's what the Candle Maker is. He's a god from the north who basically came down to Latin America and found himself, so he loved that idea."

That wide diversity of styles filtered down to the film's soundtrack as well, which features a wide range of musicians, including Radiohead, Mumford & Sons, Rod Stewart, Elvis Presley, Kinky and Paul Williams. "In the beginning," Gutierrez recalls, "the people in our legal department said, 'There's no way these bands will give you the rights to use any of their songs!' So we said, 'Let's start with the hard ones, like Radiohead's *Creep*. They said, 'There's no way Radiohead will give you that song; it's a really complicated song, because they don't always play it, and it kind of represents their one-hit wonder era for them, so they don't really like it,' so we sent them a description of how it would be used in the movie, and what it meant and how it expressed the frustration of a teenager who couldn't fit in with his family or this world, and the band said, 'Yeah, this is why that song was written and this is what it means.' From that point on, any band that would give us any trouble, we would say, 'Oh, so you think you're better than Radiohead?"

> **"I TOLD CHANNING TATUM HE WAS GOING TO BE CAPTAIN LATIN AMERICA – THE SWAGGER OF ARGENTINA, THE SMOOTHNESS OF BRAZIL AND THE MACHISMO OF MEXICO"**
> JORGE GUTIERREZ

How the movie-going public will react to a colourful, music-filled animated adventure with characters that look unlike any seen before on the big screen remains to be discovered, but for Gutierrez, it's a dream that has finally reached fruition. "I don't think any director is ever satisfied," he concedes, "but I'm super-close. This was a very ambitious movie for the schedule and the resources we had. From the beginning we said, 'We are making our own vision, our own look and aesthetic, and we will use our limitations to our advantage.

"I have to admit, I love limitations in a weird way, because they make me think outside the box. If I was told we can't do this or this, I would write around it. I think like an indie filmmaker, so I figure out what my sets are, and I write around those things, hopefully avoiding those problems and saving our money for the good stuff and the big stuff – and by being a much smaller movie, we're allowed to take a lot more creative chances."

But that being said, there is still one more significant hurdle that remains to be overcome before the director knows whether or not he's been successful. "One of my big tests was," he says with a grin, "I wanted to make sure my mom cried when she saw the movie, so I recently showed her a version of it, and she cried through half of it, so I need her to cry through the whole thing!"



The Book Of Life will be released in cinemas on 24 October.



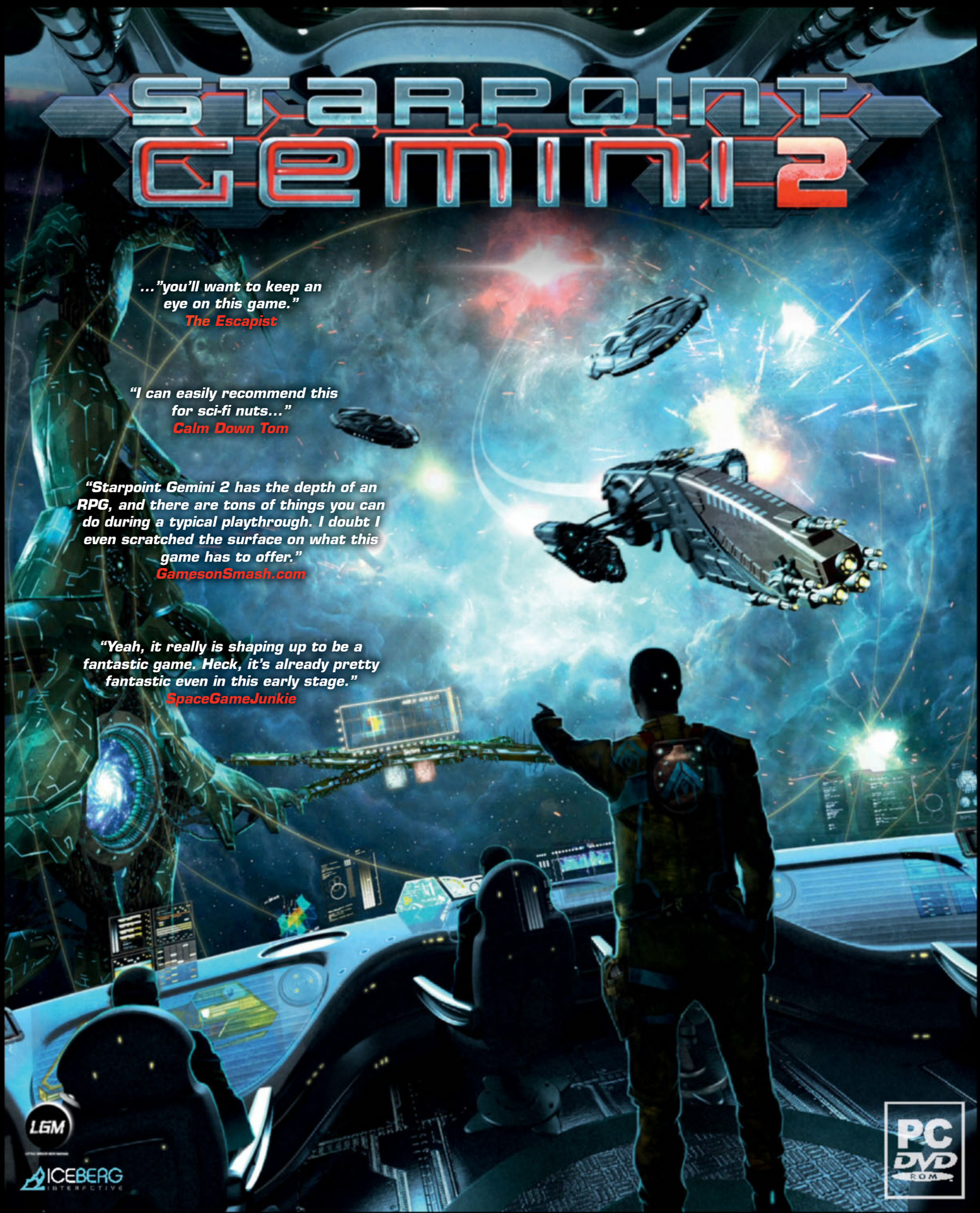


The incredible world of the movie is perhaps its central character.

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COMING SEPTEMBER 2014

SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★ Thoroughly entertaining ★★★ Good but somewhat lacking ★★ Fair at best ★ Avoid as you should *Avengers Confidential*



68 CINEMA
Theatrical releases
68 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
69 What We Do In The Shadows
69 Electric Boogaloo
70 The Giver
70 The Maze Runner
71 Lucy
72 FrightFest 2014

76 HOME/FILM
Films on DVD, Blu-ray and more
76 The 'Burbs
76 Only Lovers Left Alive
76 Wolf Creek 2
77 Ghostbusters/ Ghostbusters 2
77 Ghost In The Shell
78 Night Of The Comet
78 Killer Klowns From Outer Space
78 Lesson Of The Evil
79 Hands Of The Ripper/Countess Dracula/Twins Of Evil

80 HOME/TV
TV shows on DVD, Blu-ray and more
80 Hannibal: Season Two
80 Doctor Who: Deep Breath
81 Penny Dreadful: Season One
81 The Changes

82 VIDEOGAMES
The latest console games rated
82 The Walking Dead: Season Two
83 Hearthstone: Curse Of Naxxramas
83 Diablo 3: Reaper Of Souls
83 Guardians Of The Galaxy

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AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR STARS OR MORE...

SciFiNow Must see now!

68

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

"NOT AS BAD AS IT COULD HAVE BEEN"

TRIVIA DURING FILMING, THE CODENAME FOR *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES* WAS 'FOURSQUARE'.

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FILM INFO

Released
17 October
Certificate
12A
Director
Jonathan Liebesman
Screenwriters
Josh Appelbaum, André Nemec, Evan Daugherty
Cast
Megan Fox, Will Arnett, William Fichtner, Johnny Knoxville, Tony Shalhoub
Distributor
Paramount Pictures
Running Time
101 mins



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Party like it's 1987

You can tell a lot about an Eighties kid from who their favourite Turtle was: were they the leader, the rebel, the joker or the brains?

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles have a rose-tinted place in our hearts, and the thought of a modern update sent old school fans into a frenzy of internet hate. Who knew what horrible CGI crimes the 21st Century would inflict upon our beloved heroes in a half-shell? So fans will be glad to hear that this update isn't as bad as it could have been.

The new film sees the villainous Foot Clan intent on decimating the population of New York with a pathogen, then holding the world to ransom for the cure. Perhaps it's a little complicated for a kids film, but the unintentionally hilarious magic-button science of the movie keeps it easy enough to follow.

No-one goes to a *Turtles* film for the human co-stars, and they're predictably dull. William Fichtner gives by-the-book villainy, Shredder looks like a Transformer, Will Arnett brings likeability to a character who is a sleazeball on the page, and Whoopi Goldberg is there for some reason. Megan Fox is as terrible as you'd expect as April O'Neil, but it's not her fault; the script and director undermine April at every turn, missing no opportunity to call her "hot" or ogle her backside, and forgetting to pay anything more than lip-service to her skills as a reporter.



The Turtles are introduced in a stylish animated pre-credits sequence, but it takes a further 15 minutes or so for their CGI counterparts to appear. And they're not realistic per se – they're giant talking turtles – but they are believable. Their movements, facial expressions and fighting styles all have authenticity and weight.

And as for their classic personalities, they're here in all their two-dimensional glory. There have been some tweaks to account for the change of era – Michelangelo is now more of a tame gangsta than a surfer dude (and his vocal appreciation of April tips firmly from goofy to creepy), and Donatello can shine in a modern world where geek is good. Leonardo remains the bland Cyclops of the team, while Raphael carries what little dramatic weight there is.

There are some changes to the turtle canon, but none as jarring as the mooted – and abandoned – alien idea. April is worked into their back story in a way that makes sense, and actually makes the movie more satisfying.

It's stuffed full of action set pieces (as you'd expect from a film with Michael Bay's name on it), and while some hit the mark (Splinter vs Shredder is surprisingly badass, and there's a great car chase), the climactic battle is a little bit underpowered.

The *TMNT* source material began life as a satire on superhero comics, and while the film riffs on this occasionally (Batman comes in for a bit of stick), it could have gone further. There's a great preparing-for-battle sequence towards the end that subverts into the Turtles mucking around as only teenage boys can – which brought smiles even to the faces of hard-hearted critics – but there wasn't quite enough of that offbeat charm to keep the good will going throughout the film.

But hey, what do we know? Our generation of Turtles has been and gone. It's time for the new generation to decide which Turtle best speaks to them. And even 30 years on, it still boils down to the same thing: are they the leader, the rebel, the joker or the brains?

Abigail Chandler
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

CH-CH-CH CHANGES

How has Michael Bay departed from canon?

Are the Turtles aliens?
Hell no. We're all agreed that that would be stupid.

Are the Turtles still basically the same?
Yep. Donatello is a nerd, Michelangelo has ADHD, Leonardo is dull and noble and Raphael has authority issues.

Does Mikey love pizza?
Yes. He goes in for a particular brand too, thanks to some product placement.

Any sign of Casey Jones?
Nope. They've got to save some stuff for the mooted sequel...

Is Splinter a human that mutated into a rat, or a rat that mutated into a... bigger rat?
The second one. And there's no sign of Hamato Yoshi.

Does anyone say 'cowabunga'?
You'll just have to wait and see...

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1990)
The Turtles go live-action for the first time.

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TRIVIA WHOOPI GOLDBERG TRIED TO GET A PART IN THE ORIGINAL *TMNT* FILM AT THE BEHEST OF HER DAUGHTER. SHE LOBBIED AGAIN THIS TIME ROUND, AND GOT THE PART.

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WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

SciFiNow Must see now!

Flatshares bite

Details 15 // 86 mins // 21November **Directors** Jemaine Clement, Taika Waititi **Screenwriters** Jemaine Clement, Taika Waititi **Cast** Jemaine Clement, Taikia Waititi, Jonathan Brugh, Cori Gonzalez-Macuer **Distributor** Metrodome



Getting horror-comedy right is a notoriously tricky business, but this vampire mockumentary from the people who brought us *Flight Of The Conchords* and *Eagle Vs Shark* is an absolutely hilarious success.

A group of four vampires sharing a house in Wellington has agreed to let a documentary crew record what they get up to. Viago (Taika Waititi) is an 18th Century dandy with a broken heart, Vladislav (Jemaine Clement) is a depraved former warlord on the wane, Deacon (Jonathan Brugh) is a selfish self-proclaimed bad boy, and Petyr (Ben Fransham) is so old he's become the vampire from *Salem's Lot*. When Petyr turns local lad Nick (Cori Gonzalez-Macuer), the group suddenly find themselves enjoying life in a way they haven't for centuries. But will Nick's casual attitude to vampirism put them in danger?

Fans of Clement and Waititi's work will know what kind of humour to expect: bone-dry, beautifully observed and deeply silly. There's a brilliantly funny sequence in which the three speaking vamps furiously debate the washing-up rota, and the importance of virgin blood is floridly discussed, while a dinner party scene in which potential victims are confronted with re-enacted *Lost Boys* sequences is beautifully done.

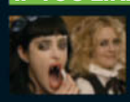
The mockumentary technique allows Clement and Waititi to fill their comedy with plenty of detail, creating a realistic and grounded world for their vamps to live in. Deacon's familiar Jackie (Jackie van Beek) is getting frustrated with doing the vampires' daytime chores without reward, the group instantly takes to Nick's impossibly unshakeable friend Stu, and it's best to put some newspaper down before you eat someone in the house.

It's also this approach that allows the filmmakers to mine the comic gold that comes from humanising their characters, and all the cast are fantastic. Clement in particular clearly has a brilliant time, as it soon becomes apparent that the lascivious Vlad's best years are behind him, while Waititi slays with his portrayal of the sweetly heartbroken Viago.

What We Do In The Shadows is laugh-out-loud hilarious, and we urge you to see it as soon as possible.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Vamps
Alicia Silverstone and Krysten Ritter are modern vamps in Amy Heckerling's underrated comedy.



SciFiNow Must see now!

ELECTRIC BOOGALOO

Cannon fodder

Details TBC // 107 mins // TBC **Director** Mark Hartley **Screenwriter** Mark Hartley **Cast** Boaz Davidson, Franco Nero, Bo Derek **Distributor** Ratpac Entertainment



Mark Hartley's extraordinarily entertaining 2008 documentary *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* looked at the neglected chapter of Australia's exploitation era. His follow-up, *Machete Maidens Unleashed!* focused on the uncharted grindhouse credentials of Filipino filmmaking. Now, for his latest (and self-proclaimed final) documentary, the Aussie filmmaker turns his attention to another wild, untold story – that of Cannon Films, distinguished by such OTT Eighties genre fare as Tobe Hooper's *Lifeforce*, the self-indulgent *Death Wish* sequels, Chuck Norris, street dance flicks like *Breakin'* and enjoyably bad superhero claptrap like *Masters Of The Universe* and *Superman IV: The Quest For Peace*.

The infamous movie moguls behind this quantity-over-quality output were the no-nonsense Israeli dynamic duo of Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus, fearlessly relentless cinephile cousins who arrogantly attempted to take on Hollywood at their own game – and ultimately failed.

The brilliance once again is what a wickedly engaging ride Hartley makes out of all the production madness. Aided by entertaining articulation from an exhaustive array of seasoned experts (Dolph Lundgren, Richard Chamberlain, Tobe Hooper and numerous Cannon alumni), not to mention goldmine archival interviews from Golan and Globus (who declined to be interviewed, shortly before announcing their own doc on themselves: *The Go-Go Boys!*), this refreshingly candid exploitation exploration is mind-blowing in its bombastic production story revelations.

These include Golan directly pitching a project to the chimp Clyde from *Every Which Way But Loose*, and the hilarious mistake in casting Sharon Stone for *King Solomon's Mines* after the producer actually meant Kathleen Turner when referring to 'That Stone woman!' A self-proclaimed *Flashdance* meets *The Exorcist* meets *Enter The Ninja* mash-up sequel that perfectly sums up the cousins' drive for turning tasteless regurgitation into potential profitability is also a highlight.

An unapologetically geeky, clip-heavy indulgence into two unashamed Hollywood outsiders, *Electric Boogaloo* is an essential guilty pleasure, and like *Not Quite Hollywood*, impossible to be bored by.

Oliver Pfeiffer
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Not Quite Hollywood:
Hartley's energetic documentary debut, charting all the unsung heroes of Aussiewood.

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TRIVIA *FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS'* RHYS DARBY APPEARS IN *WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS* AS THE LEADER OF A WEREWOLF PACK.

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THE GIVER

A sheltered life

Details 12A // 97 mins // Out now **Director** Phillip Noyce **Screenwriters** Michael Mitnick, Robert B Weide **Cast** Brenton Thwaites, Jeff Bridges, Meryl Streep **Distributor** Entertainment Film



Lois Lowry's futuristic children's novel *The Giver* tells of a seemingly idyllic society of 'Sameness', where pain, suffering and conflict have been eradicated and equality is endorsed at the expense of emotional depth and individuality.

At a graduation ceremony, young recruit Jonas (Brenton Thwaites) is appointed 'Receiver of Memory', and given access to all the memories of the past before Sameness came into existence. At the archives, Jonas meets his predecessor (Jeff Bridges), who mentors him in the forbidden pleasures – and suffering – of the past, on which the fears of this current society are built. It isn't long before Jonas acts on his new perception of the world.

Director Phillip Noyce (*Dead Calm*, *Salt*) does a good job of visually translating Lowry's story to the screen. Boldly elongated (but wholly essential) black and white visuals punctuate the drama, and the filmmaker allows his cast plenty of opportunity to breathe. Thwaites is a likeable enough lead, holding his own impressively. However, midway through, the film begins to burst beneath the weight of its own grand themes and ideas, hindering any emotional connection to the story.

A one-note supporting cast doesn't help things. Meryl Streep is bland and submissive as the Chief Elder, sporting a distracting straight-cut wig that would give *The Wicker Man*'s Lord Summerisle nightmares. Elsewhere, Alexander Skarsgård hardly registers as Jonas' 'father', while Katie Holmes is poorly miscast as his 'mother' (already a stretch given that the actress is only a decade older than Thwaites in reality).

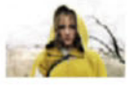
Saying this, kudos should go to production designer Ed Verreaux (*Contact*, *Looper*), who realises an incredibly well-kept future world of pristine vegetation and clear-cut domestic interiors.

However, this isn't enough to salvage a pedestrian sci-fi drama from becoming as crushingly dull as its own mediocre utopia.



Oliver Pfeiffer
FILM ★★☆☆☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



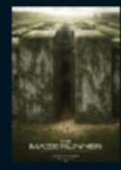
The Village
M Night Shyamalan's drama concerns an isolated society where outside influences threaten an idyllic existence.



THE MAZE RUNNER

Totes a maze

Details TBC // 125 mins // 24 October **Director** Wes Ball **Screenwriters** Noah Oppenheim, Grant Pierce Myers, TS Nowlin **Cast** Dylan O'Brien, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Will Poulter, Kaya Scodelario **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



The Maze Runner is an action-packed yet enigmatic exploration of survival and brotherhood that will please both fans of James Dashner's original novel and newcomers alike.

Thomas (Dylan O'Brien) wakes up in an elevator that opens in the Glade – an oasis at the centre of a colossal maze, peopled by teenage boys like him. Their memories have been wiped, and they have no idea why they've been sent there, or by who.

Every 30 days a new boy is sent, and each has a role to play in this miniature society. At night the 'Runners' return from mapping the maze before its doors close and the labyrinth changes. Lurking inside are the Grievers – monstrous biomechanical creatures with stings that can kill and bring back long-forgotten memories. Yet something tells you that these kids might not want to remember life outside those imposing walls.

Thomas's arrival changes everything, and within days a Griever is dead, the boys' leader Alby (Aml Ameen) has been stung, and the first girl ever arrives with a note that reads: 'She's the last one ever.' Is the maze a prison or a test? And why does the phrase 'Wicked is good' haunt both Thomas and Teresa (Kaya Scodelario)'s dreams?

O'Brien is everyman-like enough to draw you into Thomas's world without being indistinct to the point of blandness, and the cast are believable as a close-knit band. Teresa is a tad underdeveloped, but that's what sequels are for.

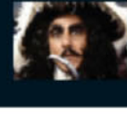
In his directorial debut, Wes Ball shows a lot of promise and visual flair. He presents the Glade as idyllic, so you can understand the boys' uneasy contentment. When Thomas finally makes his cathartic dash into the maze, you see more of its industrial underbelly. The maze becomes a more clinical place, and this shift mirrors the Gladers' changing perception of their surroundings.

The film is peppered with allegories for growing up, but they don't feel too obviously signposted. The sound design for the Grievers is creepy, and they're credible enough threats for chase scenes to get pulses racing.

The Maze Runner is an enjoyable thriller, and while the story might not get under your skin for very long, neither does it outstay its welcome. You'll want to see where these kids go next.

Krystal Sim
FILM ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Hook
When Captain Hook kidnaps Peter Pan's children, he has to re-learn what it is to be the Pan.

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TRIVIA JEFF BRIDGES, WHO ALSO CO-PRODUCED *THE GIVER*, HAD BEEN TRYING TO GET IT MADE FOR YEARS. HIS LATE FATHER LLOYD WAS ORIGINALLY IN LINE FOR THE TITULAR ROLE.



LUCY

Luc and learn

Following on from her roles in *Under The Skin* and *Her*, Scarlett Johansson's latest foray into off-kilter science fiction comes at the hands of veteran writer/director Luc Besson – a man still best known and loved for a film he made 20 years ago. And there are certainly parallels to be drawn between Mathilda, *Léon*'s young heroine, and Lucy. They're both feisty, a bit of a mess, and share a tendency toward quite serious sociopathy when pushed.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Really, to draw a comparison between the two films is unfair to either one; they're entirely different entities, the only connection between them being the hope the audience holds that Besson might manage to make a modern film that holds up to his 1994 masterpiece.

Still, the director is deservedly celebrated for his intense thrillers, slick visual style and strong female protagonists, and *Lucy* ticks all those boxes. The story follows our titular heroine, an ordinary – albeit superlatively sexy – girl living it up in Taipei for reasons seemingly undeserving of explanation. Despite her streetwise nature, she's screwed over by an ex-boyfriend, who involves her in a dodgy deal with a dangerous and almost comically violent Chinese gangster. A few hours later, she finds herself stuffed full of a trendy new drug called CPH4, and about to be shipped off to Europe.



Supposedly a hormone produced by pregnant women, CPH4 might not sound sexy, but in Besson's world it has the potential to release the 90 per cent of our brains we keep dormant, enabling human beings to understand and reach their full potential, with almost limitless (see what we did there?) possibilities. The kids are going to go crazy for it, apparently. Or, at least, they would be if an idiotic henchman hadn't decided to give poor Lucy a brutal kicking, rupturing the bag sewed into her stomach, and releasing the substance has her climbing the walls. Literally.

What awakens is a woman-shaped machine capable of extraordinary feats of awesome, from kicking the ass of that aforementioned henchman to learning Chinese in an instant and feeling no pain, remorse or – well, anything really. As the drug continues to unlock Lucy's cerebral power and extraordinary, superhero-esque powers of telepathy, transfiguration and telekinesis manifest, and her humanity begins to fade. Knowing that the substance will eventually kill her, she embarks on a violent, one-woman mission to wipe out the cartel who signed her death warrant, simultaneously promising to pass on all the mind-blowing knowledge she has absorbed to brain-scientist Professor Norman (Morgan Freeman in what is possibly his most pointless role of all time).

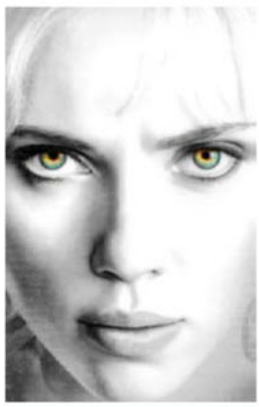
It's clear from the outset that Besson knows how silly this all is. He revels in it, exaggerating everything to the point of ridiculousness, determinedly finding the fun among the reasonably graphic violence and rather dire situation his protagonist has ended up in, and refreshingly eschewing many tropes along the way. But behind the mad, existential glint in his eyes is some sort of point – difficult to discern though it may be. Using just ten per cent of our brain capacity may have allowed humankind to do extraordinary things, but society has clearly become more concerned with having than being. Are we stunting our own evolution? And if we allowed ourselves to advance, would we want to face the consequences?

Besson's consequences for Lucy aren't all that attractive, to be honest. She might be able to travel through space time and unlock the secrets of the universe, but there's no happiness to be found for her; she's forgotten what it is. Meanwhile, as Lucy's admittedly unpredictable vengeance quest continues, the point of it all is lost. In his effort to spin an entertaining sci-fi yarn, Besson has missed the detail that makes movies compelling. The film is as lacking in humanity as his heroine, and despite a worthy performance from Johansson, who more than earns her action heroine badge, we're left just as cold by the end of it.

Cat Collins
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
15
Director
Luc Besson
Screenwriter
Luc Besson
Cast
Scarlett Johansson, Morgan Freeman, Min-sik Choi, Amr Waked
Distributor
Universal Pictures International
Running Time
89 mins



GREY MATTER? GREY AREA

Transhumans don't often fare well in film...

Limitless (2011)
Neil Burger's thriller sees Bradley Cooper become dependent on a nootropic drug that magically makes his brain work faster. But with great knowledge comes unfortunate associations with unsavoury types.

Transcendence (2014)
This turkey saw Johnny Depp's consciousness uploaded to a quantum computer. He learns the secrets of the universe but corrupted by power, attempts to take over the world, transforming it into a technological utopia. Bad move.

The Matrix (1999)
Neo's choice to take the red pill and see the Matrix was an understandable one. But ultimately his long fight to free humanity from the machines would bring about his own messy demise. For what it's worth, we'd choose the blue pill every time.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Fifth Element
Besson's inventive and visually arresting action/adventure represents silly sci-fi at its most successful.

TRIVIA THE FILM'S TITULAR CHARACTER WAS NAMED FOR THE FIRST WOMAN AND OLDEST KNOWN ANCESTOR OF MANKIND, ESTIMATED TO HAVE LIVED 3.2 MILLION YEARS AGO.

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FILM4 FRIGHTFEST 2014

Every August, horror fans descend on London's Leicester Square for Film4 FrightFest. From home invaders to zombie girlfriends, killer lovers to super creeps and haunted books to the devil himself, this year's FrightFest promised to be one we'd never forget...

FEST INFO

When
21-25 August
Where
Vue Cinema, Leicester Square

TICKETS

Details
Festival Pass £170
Day Pass £58
Thursday Pass £29
Individual Films £13
Website
www.frightfest.co.uk

FILMS

The Guest // Sin City: A Dame To Kill For // Zombeavers // Late Phases // Honeymoon // Wolf Creek 2 // Preservation // The Green Inferno // Shockwave Darkside 3D // R100 // Exists // The Forgotten // Julia // Housebound // The Last Showing // The Den // The Canal // WolfCop // Dead Snow 2: Red Vs Dead // The Harvest // Bad Milo! // Starry Eyes // White Settlers // All Cheerleaders Die // Life After Beth // The Babadook // Coherence // I Survived A Zombie Holocaust // Creep // Open Windows // Extinction // Faults // Doc Of The Dead // Among The Living // Der Samurai // Stage Fright // The House At The End Of Time // Another // Home // Alleluia // Deadly Virtues // Nymph // Blood Moon // X Moor // V/H/S: Viral // Truth Or Dare // The Signal





Day One opened with a bang with Adam Wingard's hugely entertaining Eighties throwback *The Guest* ★★★★☆, and we loved this brutal, hilarious and very stylish genre love-letter. On the other hand, *Sin City: A Dame To Kill For* ★★☆☆☆ floundered, as some great dialogue and gleefully hammy performances (Eva Green is brilliant) can't help a patchy script and diminishing returns. Also disappointing was *Zombeavers* ★★☆☆☆, which doesn't offer much beyond its fun title and a long run of occasionally self-aware beaver gags, although we did love the titular critters.

Day Two started with a slow burn, as Adrián García Bogliano's *Late Phases* ★★★★☆ impressed with its story of a blind veteran (Nick Damici) attempting to stop the lycanthrope attacking his retirement community. Combining the deliberate pace of samurai movies and the spirit of Joe R Lansdale, *Late Phases* is effective, inventive and often moving.

Leigh Janiak's *Honeymoon* ★★★★☆ also pinned us to our seats. Rose Leslie and Harry Treadaway play honeymooning newlyweds whose life together is suddenly jeopardised when Bea (Leslie) begins acting strangely. Perfectly paced and with a superb performance from Leslie, this is deeply unsettling, and will stay with you long after it's over. The entertaining *Wolf Creek 2* ★★★☆☆ also made its London debut, while *Preservation* ★★★☆☆ starred Wrenn Schmidt, Aaron Staton and Pablo Schreiber as a trio on a hunting trip. Tense and well-acted, it's just a little formulaic.

We were thrilled to finally see Eli Roth's cannibal horror *The Green Inferno* ★★☆☆☆, but left disappointed. Roth's decision to keep the black comedy flowing along with the blood is unwise, as upsetting sequences of female torture sit next to frat-house jokes. It's also lacking in tension, and we'd say it's Roth's weakest film so far. Big on ideas but light on anything else, the headache-inducing *Shockwave Darkside 3D* ★☆☆☆☆ was similarly tough to get through for different reasons.

We had a lot more fun with the indefinable and barking mad Japanese film *R100* ★★★☆☆, about a man who joins an exclusive club that sends out dominatrices to beat the crap out of him. It's very funny and totally bizarre, as exemplified by its habit of repeatedly interrupting itself to show the film's own producers wondering what the hell is going on. *The Blair Witch Project* director Eduardo Sánchez's found-footage Bigfoot movie *Exists* ★★★☆☆ was similarly entertaining. Light on characterisation but committed to simply being a kick-ass action movie starring Sasquatch, it's not particularly memorable, but we certainly enjoyed it.

Oliver Frampton's debut feature *The Forgotten* ★★★★☆ is a mournful story about a boy who hears noises in the condemned housing estate where he lives. It's chilling, with a strong emotional core, and builds to an impressive finale. We had a harder time making up our minds about *Julia* ★★☆☆☆, a stylish and well-acted spin on the rape-revenge genre that presents a strange and challenging angle, although doesn't have the script to back it up.

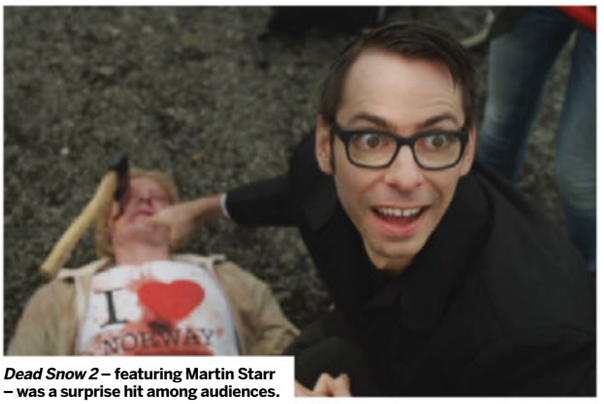
New Zealand horror-comedy *Housebound* ★★★★☆ is hilarious and beautifully constructed. Kylie (Morgana O'Reilly) is sentenced to house arrest with her mother Miriam (Rima Te Wiata), but is there any truth to her mum's belief that the house is haunted? The two leads

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Aubrey Plaza brought some star power in *Life After Beth*.





Dead Snow 2 – featuring Martin Starr – was a surprise hit among audiences.



The fun premise aside, *Zombeavers* was a disappointment.

are brilliant, and writer/director Gerard Johnstone slowly clues the audience in to the fact that there's much more going on than at first sight.

The Last Showing ★★☆☆☆ doesn't have much going for it beyond Robert Englund, who has fun as a disgruntled cinema employee who manipulates a couple into being in his 'film'. It's neither funny nor tense, while *The Den* ★★★☆☆ is much sharper, as a grad student researching chatrooms stumbles upon something terrifying. Director Zachary Donohue creates a gripping chiller that is only let down by an overwrought ending.

Similarly strong is the tense and arresting Irish film *The Canal* ★★★☆☆, which stars Rupert Evans as David, a film archivist who discovers that his house was the site of a terrible murder. As David spirals into madness, director Ivan Kavanagh tightens the screws.

The day finished with some surprisingly decent horror comedy, as *WolfCop* ★★★☆☆ made the most of its daft premise and delivered some creative, schlocky effects and some laughs, while *Dead Snow 2: Red Vs Dead* ★★★☆☆ turned out to be good fun. With a broader scope, bigger effects and a strong cast, it was one of the most 'pleasant' surprises of the festival.

Day Three opened with the return of a genre giant, as John McNaughton introduced *The Harvest* ★★★★☆, a dark riff on Hansel and Gretel starring Michael Shannon and Samantha Morton. Beautifully shot with powerful performances and a hell of a twist, the film divided audiences, but we loved it. *Bad Milo!* ★★★☆☆ is quite the contrast, but very funny, as Ken Marino discovers a rage creature emerges from his rectum whenever he gets stressed.

Starry Eyes ★★★☆☆ got a strong reaction, and boasts a hell of a performance from Alex Essoe as an aspiring actress who must pay a terrible price if she wants the role of a lifetime. It's occasionally brilliant and has a great ending, but suffers from a forgettable mid-section. Scottish independence horror *White Settlers* ★★☆☆☆ stars Pollyanna McIntosh as one half of an English couple who buy a house north of the border and pay a terrible price. After a decent start, it trails off into the usual home-invasion territory.

All Cheerleaders Die ★★★★☆ brought its manic, Eighties-flavoured energy to the main screen, and we had a great time re-watching the deliriously unpredictable horror-comedy. We also loved *Life After Beth* ★★★★☆, in which Aubrey Plaza gives a festival-stealing performance as Dane DeHaan's back-from-the-dead girlfriend who begins to display some disturbing behaviour. With a brilliant cast and a sharp script, this is very funny and surprisingly sweet, providing further confirmation of Plaza's brilliance.

Up next on the main screen, we saw what was comfortably our film of the festival: *The Babadook* ★★★★☆. Jennifer Kent's debut stars Essie Davis as a single mother struggling to handle the loss of her husband and the difficult behaviour of her son, who believes monsters are real. When they read the terrifying eponymous children's book, Samuel's behaviour gets worse – but is he right? *The Babadook* has an incredibly powerful emotional core and a brilliant lead performance from Davis. It's a moving study of grief that uses its horror elements to tell the story of a woman falling apart while being absolutely terrifying. It's superb.

We were also very impressed by indie sci-fi *Coherence* ★★★★☆, in which the ↣



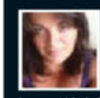


YOUR THOUGHTS

We asked you @SciFiNow what your favourite moments were



"For me it was *Coherence*. Smart sci-fi that doesn't reveal its hand too early. A total headfuck."
@TheGMcConnachie



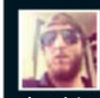
"*The Babadook*, its fairytale simplicity is beautiful. It haunted and emotionally affected on a profound level."
@ms_mjolnir



"*Faults* for its unnerving atmosphere, brilliant script and amazing performance from Mary Elizabeth Winstead."
@FilmLandEmpire



"*Late Phases*. Beautifully shot, scary, incredible acting & familial tensions sensitively explored."
@22NeilMitchell



"*Honeymoon*, for its creeping dread, amazing lead chemistry and overall an unnerving trip into the unexpected."
@KramYessev



"*Alleluia*, a look at the passions that dwell at the dark heart of relationships, beautifully shot and executed."
@H9Sheriff



"*Babadook*, *Creep* and *The Guest*. Honourable mentions for *The Canal* and *Starry Eyes*."
@rickyafraid

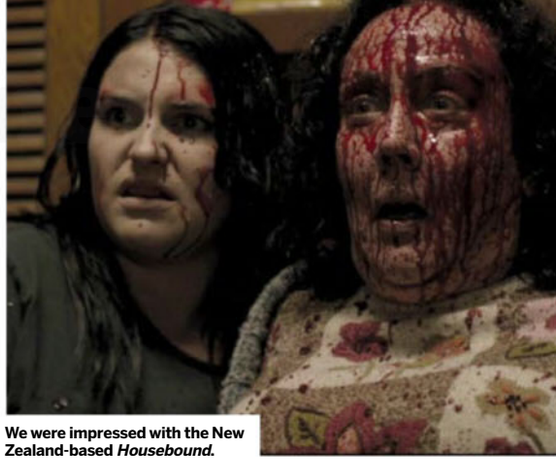


"*Dead Snow 2* (knows what it is and runs with it) and *Faults* (stunning performances)."
@ian_sandwell

TRIVIA *THE GREEN INFERNO* IS THE FIRST FILM ELI ROTH'S HAS DIRECTED SINCE *HOSTEL: PART II* IN 2007.



Faults features a star turn from Mary Elizabeth Winstead.



We were impressed with the New Zealand-based *Housebound*.

passing of a comet causes the guests of a dinner party to ask themselves some troubling questions. Low-key but perfectly constructed, it's a gripping and well-acted puzzle box that reminded us of *TimeCrimes* and *Another Earth*, and is good enough to be held up alongside them. Less impressive was New Zealand comedy *I Survived A Zombie Holocaust* ★★☆☆☆, which has a few laughs early on, but stretches its meta joke too far.

The other late movie, Patrick Brice's *Creep* ★★★★☆, was superb. The director himself plays Aaron, who agrees to film Josef (Mark Duplass) for the day. Is Josef just a normal guy, or is there something more sinister going on? *Creep* is absolutely hilarious in places and hugely unnerving in others, and Duplass is brilliant. Just don't read about it before you watch it.

Day Four got off to an energetic but muddled start as Nacho Vigalondo's *Open Windows* ★★★☆☆, starring Elijah Wood as a super-fan manipulated by evil hacker Neil Maskell, boasts buckets of visual invention, but is hamstrung by an increasingly ludicrous plot. British found-footage movie *Extinction* ★★☆☆☆ is similarly ambitious and silly, taking its camera crew to the Amazon to encounter predators long-thought to be extinct, and although its reach exceeds its grasp, it's an admirable effort.

Riley Stearns' *Faults* ★★★★☆ was much more impressive, as Leland Orser's attempts to deprogram cult acolyte Mary Elizabeth Winstead lead to a darkly comic but decidedly unsettling shift in the balance of power. With excellent performances and a tight, clever script, this is a very impressive chiller that keeps you guessing. In the Discovery Screen, *Doc Of The Dead* ★★★☆☆ was an entertaining look at the history and cultural significance of the zombie genre, with a great array of interviews. There's not a lot of new insight, but it's great fun.

In the main screen, we were very excited to see *Among The Living* ★★★☆☆, but the new film from the directors of *Inside* and *Livide* turned out to be a bit disappointing. Drawing heavily on the works of Stephen King and Tobe Hooper, it's both formulaic and an odd genre mash, but there are several well-constructed and chilling sequences to be found. Till Kleinert's *Der Samurai* ★★★★☆ is a striking debut, in which a repressed cop in a small German town is tormented by a man in a dress wielding a samurai sword. The dreamlike fairy-tale quality combines Angela Carter with David Lynch for a sensitive, intoxicating and excellent oddity.

Horror musical *Stage Fright* ★★☆☆☆ seemed promising, but Jerome Sable's feature debut is a misfire. It has its moments, but isn't particularly scary or

Stage Fright doesn't quite live up to the sum of its parts.





The surreal *Alleluia* divided audiences.



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funny, and the songs are sadly forgettable. *The House At The End Of Time* ★★★☆☆ is an effective and atmospheric haunted-house tale, as an elderly woman is released from prison to live in the house in which she was accused of murdering her family.

Jason Bognacki's ridiculous but very fun *Another* ★★★☆☆ is the definition of an acquired taste: a barking mad but hugely stylish giallo homage that throws caution and sense to the wind in a much-appreciated effort to entertain. *Home* ★★★☆☆, from writer/director Nicholas McCarthy, plays it safer with its tale of possession, but gets some decent chills and more than a few jump scares.

Day Five was finally upon us, and got off to a very strong start with Fabrice Du Welz's *Alleluia* ★★★★☆. Starring Lola Dueñas as a single mother who falls for Laurent Lucas's charmer with deadly results, it shifts genres and tones to great effect, and tells a passionate and transgressive love story that is utterly compelling. By contrast, Ate de Jong's *Deadly Virtues* ★★☆☆☆ is an S&M-led erotic thriller that doesn't have much to offer beyond its apparent edginess.

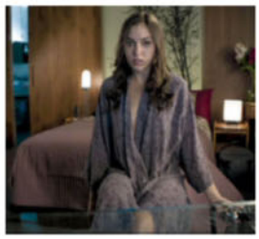
Serbian horror *Nymph* ★☆☆☆☆ makes the unwise decision to keep its monster hidden until the final moments, and spends the rest of its running time as a sub-par slasher, while Brit horror *Blood Moon* ★★☆☆☆ is an ambitious but ultimately unconvincing werewolf western. Full marks for effort, but we never really bought it. Luke Hyams' *X Moor* ★★★☆☆, about a documentary crew hunting a beast in Exmoor, only to find a serial killer, is better, but suffers from a second half that doesn't know what to do until the final twist.

The *V/H/S* franchise made its third annual appearance at FrightFest with *V/H/S: Viral* ★★★☆☆ and seemed to split audiences. There's no doubting the level of energy and invention at play, but the tone is much less coherent than previous instalments, as well as there being no real stand-out among the collected shorts. It's certainly entertaining, but it's the least effective of the series. We had a lot more fun with it than we did with Jessica Cameron's *Truth Or Dare* ★☆☆☆☆, however, a grubby indie that forces a group of reality show stars to torture each other emotionally, then physically. Beyond its general grimness, it's not well-made at all.

The final film of the festival was William Eubank's much-buzzed indie sci-fi *The Signal* ★★★★☆. It tells the story of three college students who encounter something shocking at a deserted house, and when Nic (Brenton Thwaites) wakes up, he finds himself in an unimaginable situation. Well-paced with an excellent script and a strong cast (including Olivia Cooke and Laurence Fishburne), this is a beautifully shot movie that marks Eubank as one to watch.

Massive thanks go once again to the amazing FrightFest team for organising such a brilliant event, to the filmmakers and fans who make it such a great place to be, and to the VUE cinema staff for their unflappable calm.

Jonathan Hatfull

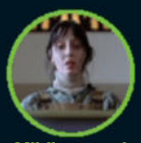


"OPEN WINDOWS WAS HINDERED BY A LUDICROUS PLOT"

THE SHELLEY SCARED SCALE



Not at all scared
The Last Showing



Mildly scared
Among The Living



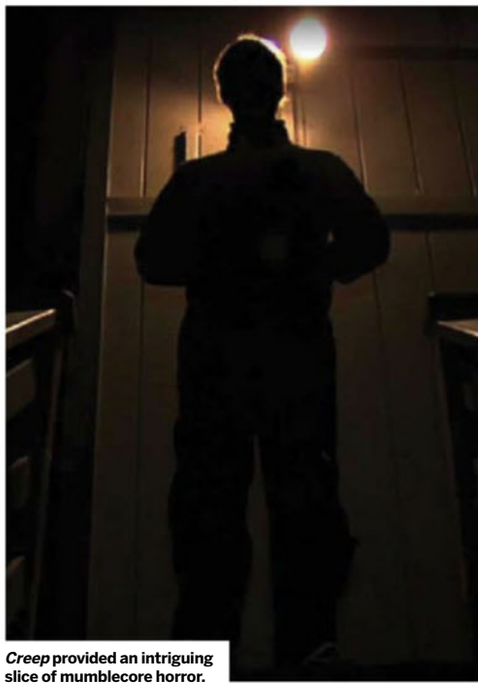
Actually quite scared
Honeymoon



Very scared indeed now
Creep



Absolutely terrified
The Babadook



Creep **provided an intriguing slice of mumblecore horror.**

Samantha Morton and Michael Shannon star in *The Harvest*.





Der Samurai **combined David Lynch and Angela Carter to great effect.**



The Signal **proved to be a fitting end to the festival.**

TRIVIA THE *CREEP* FILMMAKERS CURRENTLY HAVE TWO SEQUELS PLANNED.

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THE 'BURBS

There goes the neighbourhood

Details 12 // 97 mins // 1989 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Joe Dante
Cast Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, Rick Ducommun, Bruce Dern, Corey Feldman
Distributor Arrow Video



In his heyday, Joe Dante's films had something to say – and what a way they had of saying them.

In the case of *The 'Burbs*, it's his critique of neighbourly relations in white picket fence-Americana, defined by curtain twitching, petty resentment and lawn envy. In this representation of the American Dream's ultimately mundane endgame, even holidays are a brief respite from the daily grind ("I'm going to do something productive: I'm going to watch television" says Tom Hanks's patriarch Ray Peterson at one point).

Indeed, he plans to spend his holidays doing exactly that, punctuated by the occasional drinking binge, until the mysterious actions of his unseen neighbours catch his eye, prompting the borderline criminally obtrusive – and *Rear Window*-inspired – investigations by himself and neighbours Art (Rick Ducommun) and Mark (Bruce Dern).

Dante had already proved his singular talent for making even the darkest material seem perfectly at home in a family friendly movie via *Gremlins*. Indeed, *The 'Burbs* bears a number of similarities to his previous work: explosive goings-on in a small-town setting; the overblown musical tones of Jerry Goldsmith, and Corey Feldman milling around in the background, to name but a few. The result is a film that's competent, but not outstanding.

The 'Burbs stands out primarily as another rung on the ladder of Hanks' career, which itself is a suitably fitting legacy. In the interests of balance it also seemed to inspire *The Watch*, but so it goes.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Small Soldiers
Almost entirely a carbon copy of the plot of *Gremlins*, but hey, why change a winning formula?

ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE

Dead poet's society

Details 15 // 123 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes // **Released** Out now
Director Jim Jarmusch **Cast** Tilda Swinton, Tom Hiddleston, Mia Wasikowska, Anton Yelchin, John Hurt **Distributor** Soda Pictures



Only Lovers Left Alive isn't the film you think it is. The sight of power-thesps Tilda Swinton and Tom Hiddleston resting their luscious locks in each other's laps and the smudged fingerprints of arthouse figurehead Jim Jarmusch conjures up a very different movie to the rather lovely small-scale melodrama that unfolds like *Withnail And I* remixed by vampire queen Anne Rice.

It's marvellously odd, though – that much you can predict. Stuff happens, but it's not really a film about stuff happening; it's about people who've been alive so long that they're only really moved by each other, drawing out small-talk with theatrical flourish just for the sound of it.



Swinton dominates her scenes effortlessly, even noiselessly with all the pale perfection of a Klimt painting, her Eve smiling knowingly and benignly as Hiddleston's overwrought Adam squabbles with her faintly psychotic little sister Ava (Mia Wasikowska). It's a scene from many a Chelsea flatshare, but when these fangs come out they're far sharper than notes on the fridge.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★☆

WOLF CREEK 2

Waltzing Mick killed ya

Details 18 // 107 mins // 2013 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // **Released** Out now
Director Greg McLean **Cast** John Jarrett, Ryan Corr, Shannon Ashlyn
Distributor Entertainment One



Going from Australia's disquieting nice-guy Norman Bates to Australia's ridiculous franchise mascot Freddy Krueger in a single step, John Jarrett's repellent bushman Mick Taylor opens up *Wolf Creek 2* by dishing out a revenge killing on a couple of arsehole cops, topping it off with a nod to *Mad Max*.

That sets some of the tone nicely. There's a deluge of Ozploitation road movie references and a stream of lewd wisecracks – we're supposed to cheer him on, right?

Almost as soon as it starts, the fun is over, steering even closer to the harrowing Backpacker Murders that inspired it than its 'straighter' predecessor. Forearmed with that knowledge, an early scene with two German tourists is particularly tough to stomach, but then it's replaced by a truck flying off a cliff, a homage to Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* and a rendition of *Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport* that has only grown more sinister with time.

For long bursts it's great fun, while for the rest it's gristly. Like Vegemite, it's an acquired taste.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★☆☆



WorldMags.net

TRIVIA TOM HANKS' CHARACTER WAS ORIGINALLY SET TO BE KILLED OFF IN *THE 'BURBS*, ALTHOUGH THE DECISION WAS REVERSED AFTER HANKS WAS CAST.



GHOSTBUSTERS/ GHOSTBUSTERS 2

SciFiNow Must see now!

'Bustin out onto Blu-ray

Details PG // 101 mins/104 mins // Out now **Director** Ivan Reitman **Cast** Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis, Sigourney Weaver, Ernie Hudson, Rick Moranis **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



With the 30th anniversary of the release of Ivan Reitman's original foray into the world of freelance paranormal exorcism upon us, we get the welcome excuse to return to one of the Eighties' best-loved film franchises.

In *Ghostbusters* (★★★★★), Reitman crafted a winning dynamic out of wry ladies' man Peter Venkman (Bill Murray), amiable try-hard Ray Stantz (Dan Aykroyd) and big brain Egon Spengler (the much-missed Harold Ramis). It's one of the most perfectly cast ensembles ever to meet on the screen, with Murray notably establishing a niche for himself as Hollywood's go-to deliverer of dry wit. Coupled with the grounded presence of Dana Barrett (Sigourney Weaver) and the oddball future double-act of receptionist Janine Melnitz (Annie Potts) and Rick Moranis's über-nerd Louis Tully ("I taped *20 Minute Workout* and played it back at high speed so it only took ten minutes, and I got a really good workout"), and it's little wonder that people still come back to this.

It's a pity then that sequel *Ghostbusters 2* (★★★★★) doesn't reach quite the same comedic heights of its predecessor. The cast are still just as game (notably Ernie Hudson's Winston Zeddemore, given a bigger role here), and bad guy Vigo the Carpathian represents a decent fist at crafting a villain to rival the Stay-Puft Man of the first film, but you get the feeling that in the five-year gap between the two movies, some of the magic was lost, despite the cast's energetic attempts to suggest otherwise. Nonetheless, there are some memorable moments: the return of a ghostly Titanic ("Better late than never") and the fan-pleasing moment of Louis finally suiting up as a Ghostbuster being chief among them.

With chances of a third film seeing the light of day appearing more remote by the year, fans will undoubtedly take solace in the joy these two films represent. Of varying quality they may be, but the pleasure they provide has – and always will – be a constant.

Steve Wright

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Back To The Future
'They don't make them like they used to' is an annoying refrain, but in this instance we'll admit to its relevance.



SciFiNow Must see now!

GHOST IN THE SHELL

Electric dreams

Details 15 // 83 mins // 29 September **Director** Mamoru Oshii **Cast** Akio Ohtsuka, Atsuko Tanaka, Iemasa Kayumi, Kouichi Yamadera , Tamio Oki, Yutaka Nakano **Distributor** Manga Entertainment



When any enterprising young film obsessive decides that the time has come to discover anime, they are typically pointed in three directions: there's Studio Ghibli, of course, a world unto itself; *Akira*, that grand, groundbreaking apocalyptic tale, and Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost In The Shell*.

Combining nuanced soul-searching with jaw-dropping action, *Ghost In The Shell* demonstrates just what the form is capable of. It's technically astounding, and draws on the work of Philip K Dick and William Gibson to create what is undoubtedly one of the most important cyberpunk works in science fiction.

The plot centres on Major Motoko Kusanagi, a cyborg working for the government who is assigned to track down a mysterious hacker known as the Puppet Master. In a future where nearly everyone has some kind of cybernetic enhancement and the network is everywhere, this figure can slip in and out of everyday citizens, tricking them into doing his will. But what exactly does the Puppet Master want, and how does the mysterious Section 6 fit into all of this?

The plot of *Ghost In The Shell* is secondary to the philosophical problem facing the Major. More machine than person, she ponders whether there's anything left of her human self. Her problems are a mirror of that of the hacking programme that's been let loose; what kind of a soul does a programme have? Is it even alive?

Oshii's future Tokyo takes on a haze-like glow as our heroes pound pavement hunting for clues. The action set pieces are still every bit as stunning, and its importance to science-fiction grows clearer by the day (there's a drinking game to be had in watching just how much the Wachowskis cribbed for *The Matrix*).

It's the humanity above all else, though, that continues to impress. Watching the Major and her team chase down the puppet-ed civilians in the film's early set piece remains stunning, but it's the discovery of just how much of their personalities have been altered as part of this elaborate chase that truly resonates.

Newly remastered in HD nearly 20 years on from its debut, and *Ghost In The Shell* has lost none of its power, remaining a gateway film for genre fans looking to expand their horizons. This is a vitally important piece of cinema, and it's a thrill to revisit it.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Akira
Arguably the most important anime film ever made, *Akira* is a masterpiece in every way.

TRIVIA YOU CAN EXPLORE THE IN-FILM UNIVERSE FURTHER WITH THE ANIME SERIES *GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX*.

WorldMags.net

NIGHT OF THE COMET

Valley girls of the dead

Details 15 // 95 mins // 1984 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Thom Eberhardt
Cast Catherine Mary Stewart, Kelli Maroney, Robert Beltran, Mary Woronov
Distributor Arrow

SciFiNow Must see now!





As much as we all love a good kitsch classic, if we're being brutally honest they're not always as fun as you remember. Thankfully, *Night Of The Comet* is one of the awesome few; being every bit as sharp as it was when it first saw cinema screens back in 1984.

The passing of a comet has the whole of the world ready to celebrate, but Regina (Catherine Mary Stewart) is stuck working at the cinema. Waking up the next morning, Regina finds that LA has changed, the population having either been vaporised or zombified. Heading home, she finds that her little sister Samantha (Kelli Maroney) has survived, and the two take on the city of the dead – and the living dead.

With every passing year, the impact that *Night Of The Comet* had on Joss Whedon becomes clearer and clearer. These two valley girls are witty and well-rounded creations who are more than capable of looking after themselves as they face the apocalypse. The tough, level-headed Regina isn't denied a sex drive, while the childish and impulsive Samantha is just as handy as her big sister when it comes to fighting skills (and the put-down department).

In the best *Buffy* tradition, discussion of love lives and the pressures of responsibility go hand in hand with ass-kicking and sharp-tongued asides. Regina and Samantha feel like real people, meaning this hasn't really dated at all.

Thom Eberhardt's script walks the fine line between horror and comedy, throwing zombies and super creeps at our heroines and creating a few surprisingly tense set pieces. Whether it's a trip to the mall that goes from a dressing-up montage to gun-play, or debating whether they need to wait for a green light to cross the street, the tones are blended wonderfully. Only the film's final act, involving a team of scientists who may or may not have sinister intentions, falls a little flat.

The excellent Arrow extras include a commentary with Eberhardt, interviews with Stewart and Maroney (who remember how fun the film was to make) and a brilliantly honest interview with cult icon Mary Woronov, who is quite open about the fact that she thought she was making a piece of trash. How wrong she was.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Buffy The Vampire Slayer
The original film has its charms and a fair few Joss Whedon zingers.

KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE

Not just a clever title

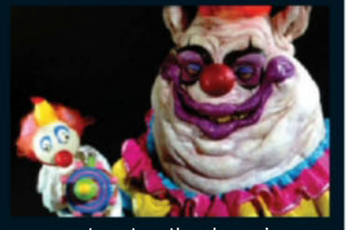
Details 18 // 83 mins // 1988 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now
Director Stephen Chiodo **Cast** Grant Cramer, Suzanne Snyder, John Vernon
Distributor Arrow



This cult classic will never look better than it does here, as Arrow's lovingly restored transfer makes the incredible neon colours of the Chiodo brothers' kitsch horror comedy burst out of the screen.

As for the film itself – well, it's still the acquired taste it always was. An alien rocket lands in a small town, sets up a carnival-esque interstellar abattoir, and sends its gruesome clown creatures to harvest the inhabitants.

If the title didn't make it clear, *Killer Klowns* is totally self-aware, and although some of the 'comedy' moments are painfully clunky, we're in it for the silliness. The Chiodo brothers' script essentially works as a way to set up the clowns' attacks, from pizza deliveries to shadow puppet shows, and they're gloriously over the top.



It overstays its welcome, but it's hard not to love, especially thanks to the casting of John Vernon as a violent and embittered veteran cop.

Killer Klowns From Outer Space is as daft as it sounds, and about as fun.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

LESSON OF THE EVIL

Psycho teacher

Details 18 // 129 mins // 2012 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** 29 September
Director Takashi Miike **Cast** Hideaki Itô, Takayuki Yamada, Mitsuru Fukikoshi
Distributor Third Window



After a brief flirtation with respectability, the perpetually prolific Takashi Miike returns to genre cinema with this high-school killer story, based on the novel by Yusuke Kishi.

English teacher Seiji Hasumi (Hideaki Itô) is charming and popular, and has a good relationship with his students. However, following a shocking accidental death, we soon learn that Hasumi-san isn't who he seems to be.

Filmmakers as busy as Miike can't always be relied on for quality, and sadly *Lesson Of The Evil* doesn't match up to his best work. It's handsomely shot, and there are moments of weirdness that are briefly reminiscent of his earlier work, but for the most part this is a slow, overlong and only intermittently interesting.

Itô is a compelling sociopath, but the twist is played out early on, leaving him with the bulk of the film to switch between personalities. It builds up towards an inevitable climax that's obviously designed to shock, but just comes across as flat and self-consciously nasty.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



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TRIVIA *NIGHT OF THE COMET* WAS ORIGINALLY TITLED TEENAGE MUTANT HORROR COMET ZOMBIES.

HANDS OF THE RIPPER/ COUNTESS DRACULA/ TWINS OF EVIL

Triplets of evil

Details 15/15/18 // 84/93/87 mins // 1971 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now
Directors Peter Sasdy/Peter Sasdy/John Hough **Cast** Eric Porter, Angharad Rees/ Ingrid Pitt/Peter Cushing, Dennis Price **Distributor** Network



Having spent themselves on the wrong side of the swinging Sixties, pursing their lips at sexuality, The House That Dripped Victim Shaming (cover your chest sweetheart, or Dracula will fly through your window) dabbled with an altogether more sympathetic band of monsters in 1971's *Hands Of The Ripper* (★★★☆☆) and *Countess Dracula* (★★★☆☆), and the least sympathetic hero ever in *Twins Of Evil* (★★★★☆).

Prefiguring the rubbish middle *Halloween* sequels, *Hands Of The Ripper* follows the daughter of Jack the Ripper 15 years on as she finds herself driving a poker through her landlady in a trance while her father's disembodied voice urges her on. Powered by psycho-babble, Anna (Angharad Rees) is the victim and killer all in one, and her saviour, Dr John Pritchard (Eric Porter), is every bit her cynical manipulator. While its story is 15 years too early, that once-grand Hammer baroque is starting to look very threadbare.

Ripper director and Hungarian émigré Peter Sasdy returns for *Countess Dracula*, bringing a rare sense of authenticity to what might have been another journey to storybook Mitteleuropa. A loose retelling of the Elisabeth Bathory story, *Countess Dracula* spends more time with a courtly melodrama than actual horror – and the reveal at the end is pure Corman-Poe – but the desperate and demented Elisabeth (Ingrid Pitt) is strangely heartbreaking.

The sublimely mad *Twins Of Evil* again takes traditional Hammer tropes into morally murky places as Peter Cushing gives it his best *Witchfinder General*. Alas, puritan nut-job Gustav Weil's foolproof plan of arbitrarily burning busty young women to death hasn't stopped Count Karnstein (Damien Thomas) from conducting Satanic rites, having sex with his own ancestor and turning one of Weil's twin wards (Mary and Madeleine Collinson) into a creature of the night. She's a throwback to the Lucy Westenra types of the Fifties though, and clearly brought it on herself.

To be on the safe side, everyone dies – which is a moral equaliser of sorts.

James Hoare

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



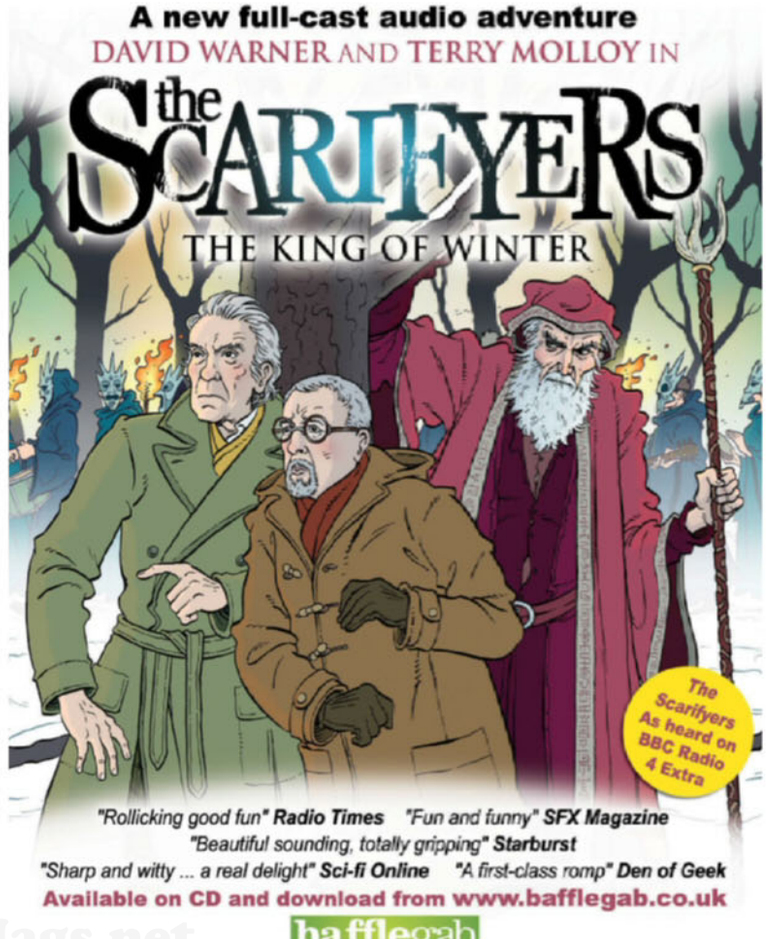
A Field In England
You just don't see enough intense black-clad 17th Century puritans in films anymore...











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Season Two

SciFiNow Must see now!

HANNIBAL Dinner date

Details 18 // 572 mins // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // Out now
Creator Bryan Fuller **Cast** Mads Mikkelsen, Hugh Dancy, Laurence Fishburne, Caroline Dhavernas **Distributor** Studiocanal



Season One of *Hannibal* was a thing of beauty. It was perfectly cast, the acting was sublime, the score frequently caused goosebumps, and every frame was so pretty that it made you want to cry. Season Two is much of the same, but more.

The opening episode follows on from Season One's finale after a brief but bloody flash-forward. Will Graham (Hugh Dancy) is stuck in Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane after being framed for murder by Hannibal Lecter (Mads Mikkelsen), who is throwing dinner parties. This setup continues for another six episodes, but stays fresh thanks to new characters, new crimes, new hallucinations and new hors d'oeuvres.

Once Will gets released from prison and appears to let go of his vendetta against Hannibal it's smooth sailing for a while, with more focus on cases and criminals (watch out for a brilliant turn from Michael Pitt as Mason Verger). And then, of course, in the spirit of *Hannibal*, it all goes spectacularly tits up.

What makes the show really, very special is the relationship between Will and Hannibal and the extreme tension that radiates from every frame whenever they are alone in a room together. Will Hannibal kiss him? Will he kill him? Will he eat him? Mixed signals, man. Literally anything could happen at this point and it would still be feasible.

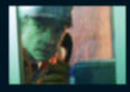
Will and Hannibal's close and damaging relationship starts to morph them into one character. Dancy loses a fair chunk of the vulnerability that held Will back in Season One and begins to exhibit some of the psychopathic tendencies that make his therapist so chilling. Mikkelsen, on the other hand, brings Hannibal down to a more human level while also playing him as the god he believes he is.

Finally, good news for gore fans: *Hannibal* leaves human totem poles behind this season and kicks it up a notch with human beehives, human mosaics and humans inside horses. And someone gets their face torn off, so look forward to that.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Fargo
Not quite as dark or pretty as *Hannibal*, but it makes up for it in laughs and weirdness.



DOCTOR WHO: DEEP BREATH The clock strikes 12

Details PG // 76 mins // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes // Out now **Writer** Steven Moffat
Cast Peter Capaldi, Jenna Coleman, Neve McIntosh, Catrin Stewart, Dan Starkey
Distributor BBC



After the brilliance of 'The Day Of The Doctor' and the mehness of 'The Time Of The Doctor', *Doctor Who*'s next outing could have gone either way. Sadly, 'Deep Breath' edges more towards the 'meh' end of the scale.

Although the dialogue was snappy and engaging, the Victorian London setting and 'cyborg that wants to be human' plot felt a bit samey. It's fine for a tepid mid-season episode, but a 75-minute post-regeneration story needs thrills and panache. As far as new Doctor introductions go, this was more 'shaking hands at a conference' than 'spotting your kids in the airport arrivals lounge'. Capaldi deserved the latter.

On the subject of Capaldi, the 11th Doctor is great, somehow radiating energy and exhaustion at the same time. He's likeable, but also gruff enough for you to know that you wouldn't want to cross him. It could be the accent, or it could be the eyebrows. Since 'The Day Of The Doctor', he has more or less shared the role with his eyebrows. You don't need scarves or bowties when you have eyebrows like that.

Likewise, Jenna Coleman is still rather brilliant as Clara. She's got the acting chops, and is feisty, smart and adorable. All she needs is the right story and some intense character development to be really wonderful. With something solid to work with, she could be so much more than just a plot device.

Speaking of plot, it looks like there could be an underlining story arc for Series Eight after the cyborg (God rest his metal soul) played the episode out by arriving in the Promised Land as introductions were made by the flirty and entirely sinister Missy (Michelle Gomez), who also casually claimed the Doctor was her boyfriend. Could be promising. And although it was removed from the Asian edit, top points to Steven Moffat for working a same-sex, lizard-human kiss into a prime-time family show. You go, Moffat.

In summary, Capaldi has the ability to make this the best season yet, but going on the first episode alone, don't hold your breath.

Poppy-Jay Palmer
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Torchwood
The *Doctor Who* spin-off featuring Captain Jack is a must for fans missing the Russell T Davies days.

TRIVIA DAVID TENNANT AUDITIONED FOR THE TITLE ROLE IN *HANNIBAL*, AND LEE PACE WAS CONSIDERED FOR WILL GRAHAM.



Season One

PENNY DREADFUL

High vamp

Details 18 // 417 mins // BD • DVD // 13 October **Creator** John Logan
Cast Eva Green, Josh Hartnett, Timothy Dalton, Harry Treadaway
Distributor Paramount Home Entertainment



Penny Dreadful has tremendous prestige behind it. This lavish gothic drama comes from *Skyfall*'s John Logan, is produced by Sam Mendes, with episodes directed by *The Orphanage*'s JA Bayona, and brings together the genre's most iconic monsters.

So we were disappointed to see this beautifully shot, well-cast show stumble so quickly. The first few episodes lurch around like Universal's Frankenstein's monster in search of a tone, but it's worth sticking around.

American carnival sharp-shooter Ethan Chandler (Josh Hartnett) is recruited by the mysterious Vanessa Ives (Eva Green) and the determined Sir Malcolm Murray (Timothy Dalton) to help them find Malcolm's daughter Mina. Dr Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway) lends his medical expertise when he's not being hunted by his creation (Rory Kinnear), while Vanessa is bewitched by the charming Dorian Grey (Reeve Carney). But why is Vanessa such an important part of this mystery?

It's tempting to blame the success of *American Horror Story* for the skittish and dull first few episodes. That series showed that grim horror and delirious high camp can blend, but Logan's attempts to mash tones aren't quite successful. There's something appealing about the *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* quality; watching Treadaway's twitchy, pallid Victor alongside Dalton's fiery Malcolm is compelling, but often frustrating, and storylines suffer. Dorian Grey is a languid distraction, Billie Piper's consumptive wretch never feels rounded, and the show only seems perfunctorily interested in solving its own mystery.

We're thankful, then, for Eva Green, who carries the series so completely that it illuminates how much of the rest needs fixing. Not only does she get the biggest showstopper (channelling the spirit of Malcolm's dead son while possessed by a demon), but the best episode of the series is devoted to her back story.

The second half of the season is much improved, as the show finally settles on a direction, and we'll certainly be back for Season Two. However, this could have been much more than a beautiful guilty pleasure.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Ultraviolet
Joe Ahearne's grim London-set vampire drama is focused, tense and scary.



SciFiNow Must see now!

THE CHANGES

Turn and face the strain

Details PG // 246 mins // DVD // Out now **Creator** Anna Holme **Cast** Vicky Williams, Keith Ashton, Rafiq Anwar **Distributor** BFI



The BBC children's series *The Changes* came a year after Jon Pertwee's tenure in *Doctor Who* ended, and it's interesting to note the similar urgent sense of environmental awareness that drove the Third Doctor's stories and this children's show.

Based on the novel by Keith Ashton, *The Changes* begins in the home of the Gore family As the news discusses the strange weather patterns around the globe, a strange noise fills the room and the family suffer some kind of fit, destroying any machines in their house. All around the country, people are compelled to destroy any technological equipment. Fearing for their safety, the Gores decide to flee to France, but young Nicky (Vicky Williams) is separated and forced to fend for herself, during which time she convinces a group of Sikhs to let her join their search for safe haven.

The Changes doesn't waste time hanging around; we're barely introduced to Nicky and her parents before they're tearing their home apart. The unexplained aggression of these scenes is tremendously effective – more so than the out-in-the-street scenes, presumably suffering from a lack of budget. In classic children's story tradition, Nicky is separated from her parents and forced to fend for herself, and quickly proves capable of doing so.



The Changes is a little scattershot in terms of what exactly it's aiming at, whether it's our overreliance on technology, our cultural prejudices or what we're doing to the planet. In fact, it seems happy to take aim at everything, and it's no less watchable for it. The first half of the series, focusing on Nicky's growing friendship with the group of Sikhs, is admittedly much more interesting than the second, which sees Nicky fall into the hands of a deeply suspicious group of villagers, who accuse her of witchcraft.

It's definitely of its time, but the issues raised by *The Changes* still feel relevant, and Vicky Williams' Nicky, both open-minded but stubborn and determined, makes for a great protagonist. This is well worth revisiting.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Doctor Who: The Green Death
Because we feel more comfortable recommending this than *Threads*.

TRIVIA VETERAN GENRE ACTOR DAVID WARNER APPEARS IN *PENNY DREADFUL* AS DOCTOR VAN HELSING, GIVING ADVICE TO VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN.

WorldMags.net

GAME INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
18
Formats
iOS, Android, Kindle, PC, PS3, PS Vita, X360
Publisher
Telltale Games
Developer
In-house
Players
1
Price
£9.99
Downloadable
Yes



Season Two

SciFiNow Must play now!

THE WALKING DEAD

Days gone bye



DEAD RISING

Do I need to play *Season One* before this?
It's not required, but we do advise it. The fun of these games is in seeing how the characters evolve, and an emotional connection with Clementine is at the centre of this story.

How about *400 Days*?
Well, you can skip *400 Days* if you want, as it's simply an interlude between the two seasons. It does, however, introduce a lot of the new cast.

Is it still awesome?
Season Two is pretty fun. It's not as heart-wrenching, but it'll certainly impact you in a similar way.

Please tell me those glitches have gone?
Nope. *Season Two* is as glitchy and buggy as every other Telltale release – it's getting super frustrating.

Better than the comics?
The comics seem to be meandering a bit, but this feels alive in ways that Kirkman's world isn't. You won't be disappointed.

When did horror become so flaccid? Admittedly, we were never expecting Telltale to deliver a digital version of *Night Of The Living Dead*, but we certainly hoped that *The Walking Dead: Season Two* would have more going for it than AMC's divisive television adaptation. Neither are particularly bad, but both the show and game arguably suffer from being unnecessarily safe, lacking the bite of Robert Kirkman's source materiel and the anguish the best of the genre has to offer. That's not to say you shouldn't give *Season Two* a play, because you absolutely should, but it's well worth getting your expectations in check before activating the download.

Season Two picks up almost immediately after the haunting events of *Season One*, following Clementine in her journey from abandoned innocent to unlikely survivor in a world she's struggling to understand. Initially, we were concerned that Telltale would pull its punches as it allowed us to survey this twisted reality through the eyes of a child, but despite a few missteps it's a pretty harrowing story.

We can't imagine there's a gamer out there that didn't fall in love with Clementine after her last adventure, and Telltale plays on that relationship masterfully, as it has you shaping how she grows, develops and handles herself at the end of the world. You'll decide how she interacts with friends old and new and survives a series of brutal lose-lose situations, and you'll feel genuinely guilty when it all hits the fan – can you live with yourself when you realise you've inadvertently condemned America's wasteland sweetheart to a hellstorm of pain and anguish? Seriously, *Season Two* forces you into some pretty dark and twisted spaces.

While each brush with death and brutality is shocking in its own way, they lack the immediacy of *Season One*'s encounters – they just aren't as memorable. This could be, in part at least, because *Season Two*'s five chapters lack the father/daughter dynamic between Clementine and Lee Everett. This forced us into making tough decisions to protect a little girl from the horror of it all, but with her in the thick of it this time around, there a bigger impetuous on survival by any means necessary. It won't hit you as hard, but that doesn't mean it isn't entertaining to play.

The gameplay remains largely unchanged from *Season One*, though *The Walking Dead* has abandoned many of its adventure-game roots. This isn't such a bad thing, mind; it means you'll spend less time following up on inane fetch quests and ridiculous puzzles ad nauseam. The game moves at a wickedly fast momentum, constantly driving you into the next taxing situation and forcing you to reevaluate your priorities in the haphazard society that's formed around Clementine.

That said, the same problems that seem to exist in every Telltale release are present here. It's as disappointing as ever to see the numerous amounts of pop-in, slow-down and game crashes. *The Wolf Among Us* recently suffered from similar issues, and it's becoming less forgivable with every release. Telltale needs to rework its engine – or discover its limitations – before it approaches the inevitable *Season Three*, not to mention the incoming *Game Of Thrones* adaptation.

While *The Walking Dead: Season Two* isn't going to win any game-of-the-year awards, nor affect anyone as deeply as the first season managed, it's still incredibly fun to play. The pacing is brilliant, and the acting and writing sublime, but it lacks the edge of the previous season. That said, this still arguably represents the best way to experience *The Walking Dead* outside of re-reading the first couple of graphic novels.

Josh West
VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Wolf Among Us
Bigby 'The Big Bad' Wolf struggles to keep a handle on the out-of-control Fables in New York City.

TRIVIA *KILL BILL* STAR MICHAEL MADSEN APPEARS IN TWO EPISODES AS THE VOICE OF WILLIAM CARVER.

WorldMags.net



HEARTHSTONE: CURSE OF NAXXRAMAS

You'll come for one game, but stay for an evening

Format PC, Mac, iOS // **Age rating** 12 // **Publisher** Blizzard Entertainment // **Developer** In house // **Players** 1 2 // **Released** Out now // **Price** Free // **Downloadable** Yes



After younger years defined by boxes of bent cards and shady trading tactics on the playground, we honestly thought we were done with battling cards. The mess, the emotions, the empty wallets – it's a vice we were happy to shake. But here we are, close to two decades on from the *Pokémon* time vampire that stole our childhoods, with emotions running just as high and our wallets emptier than ever. Thankfully, there's none of the mess, and that's because the inescapable addiction has materialised digitally with *Hearthstone*, Blizzard's free-to-play collectable card game that tasks players with battling it out with fantasy characters ripped straight from its popular *Warcraft* universe.

But you don't need to have any knowledge of *World Of Warcraft* to enjoy it; this is straight-up card-battling experience that's incredibly accessible for complete newcomers, and surprisingly deep for experienced tabletop warriors. With nine different classes to choose from – ranging from Warlock and Warrior, to Mage and Rogue – you'll quickly find a fighting style to pick up, and *Hearthstone* even gives you a helping hand with starter hands and deck-building tips. The goal is simple: knock your enemies' 30 life points to zero while dropping cards of ever-escalating power and potency, governed by ten mana crystals that rise and replenish on every turn.

When the base free-to-play game dropped earlier in the year, it quickly dominated all of our spare time – but playing against real opponents when testing new decks became a bit of a drag. *Hearthstone* was screaming out for a single-player campaign, and Blizzard has finally delivered. *Curse Of Naxxramas* has introduced 30 new cards into play, as well as five themed wings – each offering a new twist on established tactics and styles.

Honestly, we didn't think that *Hearthstone* could get any more entertaining, but the 14 bosses across all wings provide such a wickedly fun challenge that it's hard for us not to recommend this to everyone with even a passing interest. Each wing costs £4.99 – or 700 Gold coins that you amass playing the free-to-play versus mode – and it's totally worth the price.

Curse Of Naxxramas is a challenging, insanely balanced and entirely enjoyable expansion to one of this year's best games.

Josh West
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Magic 2015
The easiest way to get into *Magic: The Gathering*, although there's a heavy focus on in-app purchases.

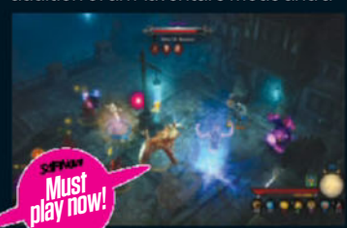
DIABLO III: REAPER OF SOULS ULTIMATE EVIL EDITION

Collecting loot until dawn

Format PS4, Xbox One // **Age rating** 18 // **Publisher** Blizzard Entertainment // **Developer** In-house // **Players** 1-4 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £49.99 // **Downloadable** Yes

Combining the original *Diablo 3* and *Reaper Of Souls* expansions, this is the perfect way to play if you're still yet to jump into Blizzard's dungeon crawler and have a shiny next-gen console.

The initial concerns that surrounded *Diablo 3* have been all but eradicated (we're looking at you, online auction house), and the addition of an Adventure Mode and a new character have helped extend the all-important end-game content.



Integrally, *Ultimate Evil Edition* supports four-player local co-op, ensuring that you can jump in on the action at a moment's notice. It's still one of the best co-operative games on the market, helped somewhat by the console-exclusive Apprentice Mode, which scales the stats of the lower-level heroes in your party to an appropriate level to survive.

It looks beautiful, plays well at both 1080p and 60fps, and will have you welcoming the sunrise with bloodshot eyes and a warm cup of coffee to help nurse those swollen thumbs.

Josh West
VERDICT ★★★★★

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY: THE UNIVERSAL WEAPON

This isn't the tie-in you're looking for

Format iOS, Android // **Age rating** 12 // **Publisher** Marvel Entertainment // **Developer** In house // **Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £2.99 // **Downloadable** Yes

In a desperate attempt to get a little more from the characters that we love so much, we are left to begrudgingly pick up our iPhone and search the App Store for whatever in-app purchase hellstorm Marvel has released in tandem with its latest flick.

Ah, *Guardians Of The Galaxy: The Universal Weapon*. "Here we go," we thought. Imagine our surprise when we discovered that it wasn't a total time-waste, nor an unceremonious sinkhole for our digitally stored card details, as it featured zero IAPs.



The Universal Weapon is simple enough; an arena-based fighter with super-light RPG-elements to keep you engaged. Admittedly, there isn't much to it; you'll stand stationary in a room and swipe your finger ad nauseam to fight, move and pull off super-combo attacks. But it rewards you with equipment, items and more characters, rendered in a fairly endearing style.

You'll probably be bored of *The Universal Weapon* soon after you download it, but if you really can't wait for the Blu-ray release of *Guardians* then this might satisfy your urge for the running time alone.

Josh West
VERDICT ★★★★★

TRIVIA BLIZZARD IS LOOKING INTO *WORLD OF WARCRAFT* INTEGRATION WITH *HEARTHSTONE*, SO RAID BOSSES START DROPPING CARDS, AND GAMES CAN BE ACTIVATED FROM A TAVERN WITH THE RANDOMS OF AZEROTH.

SciFiNow Vault

TOYS // COLLECTABLES // COOL STUFF

1 Pop! Rides Back To The Future

Marty McFly is back and more adorable than ever, because this time he comes with a teeny tiny Delorean, aww. Cute and compact, this is the closest you'll ever get to having your own pocket Michael J Fox. When he gets too tired to drive, you can pop him out the car and let him stretch his precious little legs. Bless.

StarZoneToys.com // £29.99

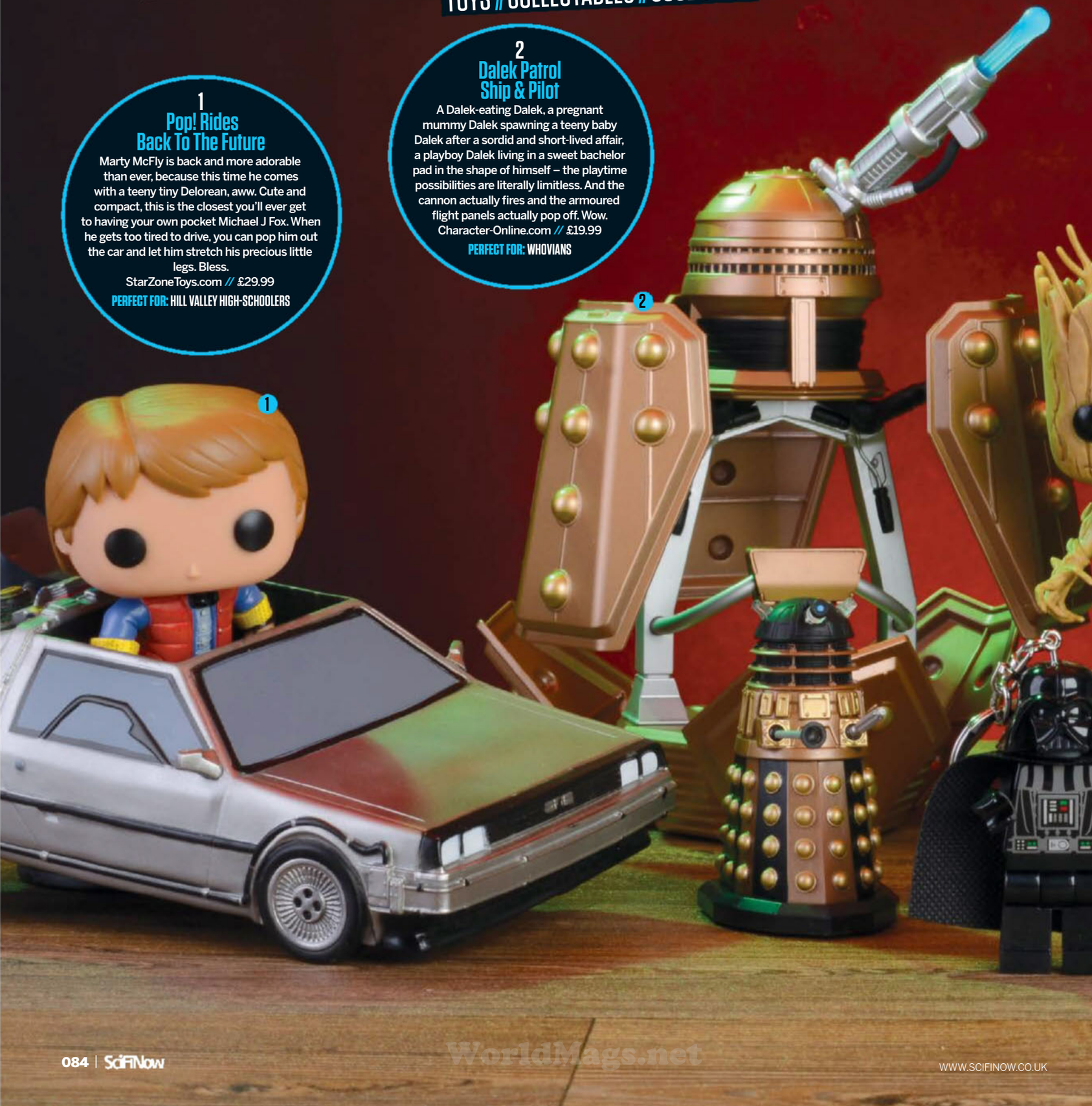
PERFECT FOR: HILL VALLEY HIGH-SCHOOLERS

2 Dalek Patrol Ship & Pilot

A Dalek-eating Dalek, a pregnant mummy Dalek spawning a teeny baby Dalek after a sordid and short-lived affair, a playboy Dalek living in a sweet bachelor pad in the shape of himself – the playtime possibilities are literally limitless. And the cannon actually fires and the armoured flight panels actually pop off. Wow.

Character-Online.com // £19.99

PERFECT FOR: WHOVIANS



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3 Groot & Rocket Pop! Vinyl Figures

Amazingly, with four dots for eyes, a nose and a line-mouth between them, these figurines still manage to look remarkably like Rocket and Groot rather than just any old generic raccoon and tree creature. The only problem is that they'll set you back nearly £40, because let's face it, no one is going to buy just one of them.

StarZoneToys.com // £19.99 each

PERFECT FOR: GALAXY DEFENDERS

4 Darth Vader LED Lite

It's Stormtrooper Steve's stag do. You're too hot in your armour, your knees are starting to sweat, and all your Stormtrooper pals are drunk and playing chicken with their blaster rifles. You are the designated driver, sober and pissed off. At least you can whip out your Darth Vader LED keychain when you can't find the lock on the minibus, and gaze upon the helmet of the Sith Lord while you're at it.

Shop.Lego.com // £9.99

PERFECT FOR: DARK SIDE ACOLYTES

5 Pacific Rim Striker Eureka Figure

Like a Transformer, only cooler and with no transforming abilities. Train your cat to role-play a Kaiju and challenge it to a battle to the death (Disclaimer: don't actually kill your cat. This 2nd Deployment Jaeger Striker Eureka may be awesome, but it's not worth the love of a kitty).

StarZoneToys.com // £18.99

PERFECT FOR: KAIJU GROUPIES

Top 5 Zombie-themed tees

Get yours from Redbubble.com

Happy Brains Tee

A zombified Bob Ross painting a brain, because why not? £15.57



Zombie Response Team

Like one of those lifeguard tees, but cooler and with a greater risk of infection. £15.50



Eat Brains T-Shirt

Stamp on the leaking brains of lesser beings, ripping the life from their hearts, and look cute doing it. £17.24



Zombie Christmas Shirt

It's never too early to start shopping, and this undead-themed Fair Isle tee will warm torsos and hearts. £17.91



Zombowie Tee

Turns out there is no life on Mars; only reanimation. £14.88



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ROBO RALLY

Publisher: Avalon Hill Games // **Players:** 2-8 // **RRP:** £39.99

Richard Garfield's classic board game is an astonishing 20 years old, so why are we covering it here? Simple: it's recently been repackaged for a new generation of gamers, and it remains as fresh and enjoyable as the day it was first conceived.

For those unaware, *Robo Rally* is a racing game, but one with an interesting twist. Instead of having sleek vehicles or high-tech spaceships to race with, you're instead lumbered with a selection of eight different robots that look like rejects from *Batteries Not Included* as they race around a factory.

The idea behind *Robo Rally* is to take your robot and race through a set number of checkpoints in the correct order. It sounds amazingly simplistic, but don't expect an easy ride, as this is from the fertile imagination that created *Magic: The Gathering*.

Each turn starts with all the players selecting five 'Program Cards' that typically give directions and the amount of spaces their robot will move. The last person to place their cards has 30 seconds to work out an order, and if they run out of time all unused cards are placed face down and the player to their right selects the remaining order. Once everyone

1 PROGRAM CARDS
You use these to power your robot on each turn. Play them carefully, as you're trying to get the upper hand on your opponents.

2 TOUCH FLAGS
These are the flags you need to pass. Make sure you hit each one in the correct order.

3 ROBOTS
The robots are full of character and quite cute to look at. They're well made and instantly recognisable.

4 POWER DOWN TOKENS
Use one of these when you want to restore all damage to your robot. You won't be able to move on that turn.

5 BOARD
The board is split into pieces, allowing for lots of different track layouts.

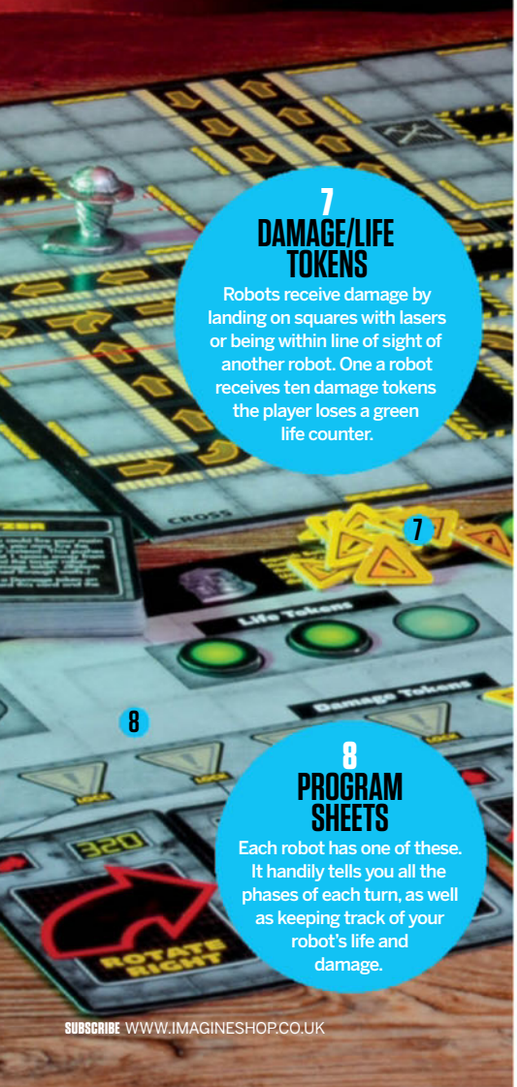
6 OPTION CARDS
These are very useful cards that can turn a game in your favour. Earn them by landing on a hammer tile when your robot stops moving.

has chosen their moves, they flip their top card at the same time, upon which chaos ensues. Movement is decided by whoever has the highest priority (a three-digit number in the top-right of the card), so a fair amount of strategy is required while placing your cards.

Robots can collide with each other and different objects, while special bonus cards can be activated if you manage to land on the special hammer symbols that appear at various points of the board. Of course, everyone else is trying to hit them too, meaning you're constantly trying to outthink your opponents. Conveyer belts, cogs and lasers add to the carnage, and it's possible for your robots to get damaged. You'll receive one less 'Program Card' for every point of damage, meaning you'll need to occasionally 'Power Down', which restores your damage but stops you from moving. It's a neat risk-versus-reward mechanic that makes games tense and exciting. While *Robo Rally* caters for two players, it's far more fun with larger groups, as it allows you to appreciate just how balanced Garfield's game is.

Younger players may get a little frustrated with it due to the need to remember how certain items will affect your robot, but everyone else will have a blast. All in all, it's a classic board game that should be in every collection.

BEST FOR: SOCIAL GAMERS



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2. KIORA, THE CRASHING WAVE £14



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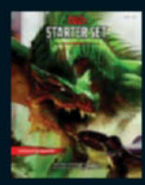
Dungeons & Dragons Starter Set

Publisher: Wizards Of The Coast // **Players:** 2-6 // **RRP:** £19.99

Those wanting to explore the world of *Dungeons & Dragons* would do well to pick up this well-crafted entry guide. The 32-page rulebook does an excellent job of describing the base rules, and covers four playable classes: Fighter, Wizard, Rogue and Cleric. It sensibly explains the six key abilities that rule *D&D*, the combat system and an interesting range of useful spells for the Mage and Cleric.

The 64-page Dungeon Master's book is even better, further fleshing out the rules and giving useful tips for running a game.

A good DM is essential to a game of *D&D*, so it's great to see Wizards has included a cracking adventure called *Lost Mine Of Phandelver* to ensure your first adventure kicks off in grand style. Designed to take characters up to level five, it features encounters with sneaky goblins, dangerous wraiths and an inevitable evil dragon called Venomfang.



The adventure is well-paced, and does a great job of covering all the base rules, making it the perfect stepping stone for when the *D&D* fifth edition is released later in the year.

BEST FOR: NEW GAMERS

A Touch Of Evil: Dark Gothic Deck Building

Publisher: Flying Frog Productions // **Players:** 2-6 // **RRP:** £33.99

Despite being yet another deck-building game, there are plenty of new ideas to justify adding it to your collection. The theme of *Dark Gothic* is monster hunting, with players taking control of a variety of different characters and using allies and gear to defeat a series of increasingly difficult villains, from werewolves to vampires. As the villains grow in power, the 'Shadows Stack' slowly builds. Should there be ten cards in the stack, the game is over and all the players lose.

While there's a certain amount of co-operative play, like all deck-builders there can only be one winner, with victory going to whoever secures the most investigation points when the final villain is defeated. Each of the eight heroes are well balanced with a range of unique skills, while there are plenty of interesting cards that can turn a carefully crafted game on its head. There's also the 'Omen Die', which is rolled in conjunction with specific cards, creating positive or negative effects that will delight or frustrate whoever rolls it.



It's all held together with Flying Frog Productions' high-quality components, cheesy art design and a suitably creepy theme. All in all, it's the perfect game to get out for Halloween.

BEST FOR: EXPERIENCED GAMERS

Expansion Of The Month

QUARRIORS! LIGHT VS DARK

Publisher: Wizkids // **Players:** 2-4
RRP: £24.99

Duality is the theme of the latest *Quarriors!* expansion. The aim is to score a set amount of glory points by amassing an army of monsters and battling your opponents. By rolling your dice, you can summon monsters or create 'Quiddity', which can then be used to buy spells and monsters. The key change to past games is the introduction of Light and Dark 'Quiddity', which can lower the casting cost of a card if you use some of the relevant type. There are also bigger die that offer larger amounts of 'Quiddity' (which can sometimes lead to lucky advantages on a lucky roll).



Oh, and it's completely standalone, meaning you don't need any additional versions of the game to enjoy it.

Do You Remember?

ATMOSFEAR

And you thought Dungeon Masters were scary...

If you were a child of the early Nineties, you'll instantly remember this classic interactive board game. *Atmosfear*'s big hook was its use of a host called the 'Gatekeeper', who would give you instructions via the included VHS tape. The game itself was relatively simple, requiring you to do nothing more than traverse the game board and collect six 'Keystones'. Once they had all been collected, you'd face your greatest fear (a random event) and win the game. While it was simple, the interaction from the 'Gatekeeper' was superb, drawing you into the game and making it feel more involved that it actually was. It became a huge success for its creators, selling 2 million copies in its first two years. It's since been released on DVD, meaning a new generation can experience it.



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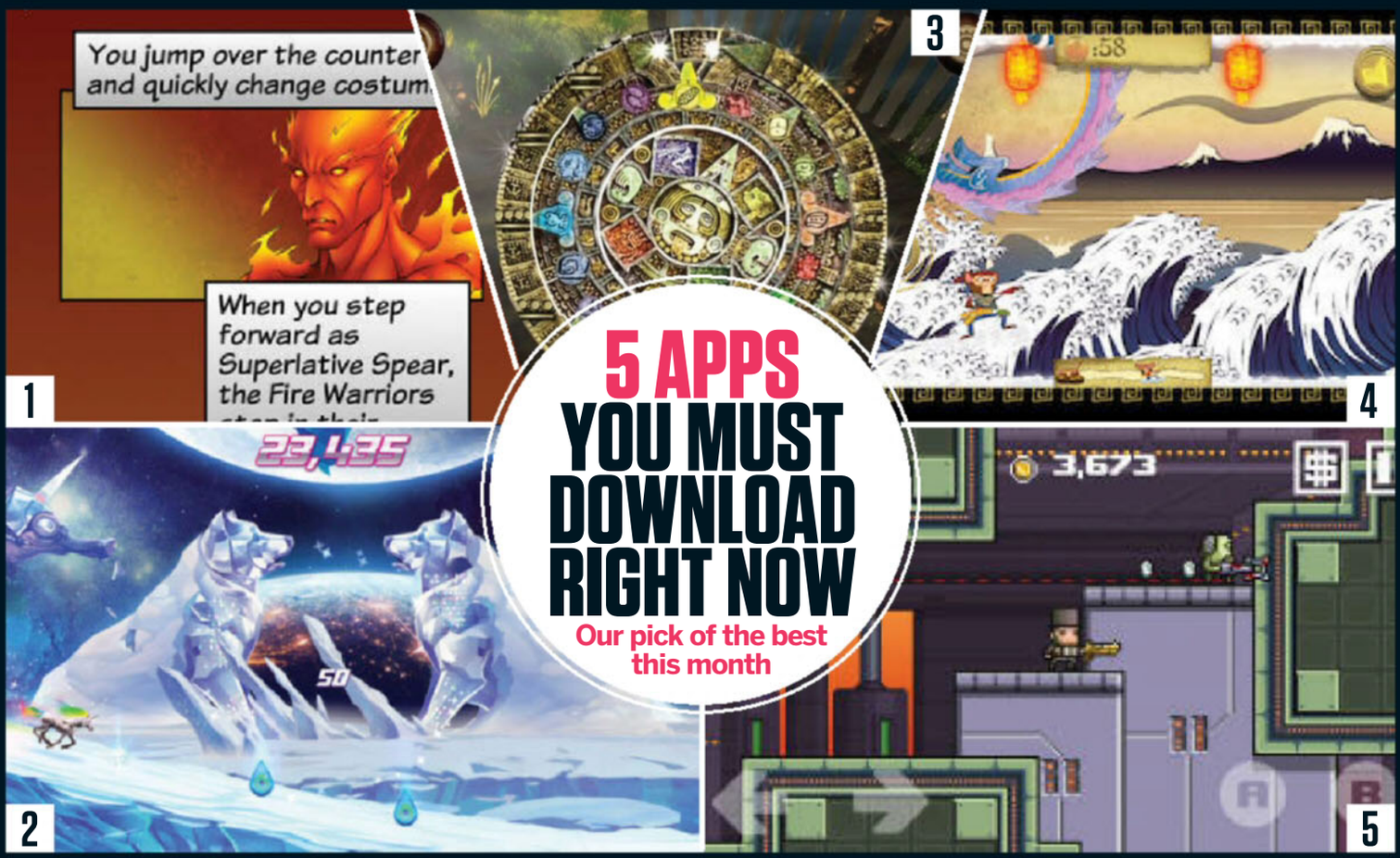
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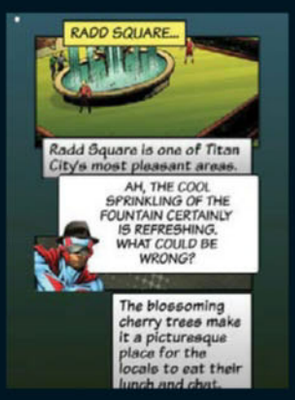
Our pick of the best this month

APPOINTMENT WITH F.E.A.R

PRICE: £1.99/$2.99
FOR: IOS

1 In Titan City, a motley band of supervillains including Tiger Cat and Chainsaw Bronski are plotting to take over the world, and it's up to you to stop them. First, you need to gather clues and solve crimes before saving the civilians and your appointment with fear. Create your characters, choose your powers, design your costume and build the story. It's *The Sims*, but with Titanium Cyborgs.

BEST FOR: FIGHTING FANTASISTS



ROBOT UNICORN ATTACK 2

PRICE: FREE
FOR: IOS/ANDROID

2 If you're fed up to your forehead of forests and dark elves, but still like a touch of fantasy, try *Robot Unicorn Attack 2*. Play as a robot unicorn as you navigate a heavenly dreamscape, passing dolphins, fairies and rainbows on the way. You can improve your performance with upgrades for your tail, wings, body and horn. Trade Teardrops for new horns like Iron Shard Of The Forge, Axe Of Wrath and Bone Daddy.

BEST FOR: BRONIES WITH RAGE



VANISHED: THE ISLAND

PRICE: £0.69/$0.99
FOR: IOS

3 Escape the humdrum of regular life by visiting the Island for an archaeological adventure. Your beloved aunt has gone missing – to find her, you must explore the exotic surroundings, collect artefacts and solve puzzles. The more of the island you explore, the more clues you will uncover, and the more likely you are to see your virtual aunt again. There isn't much replay value, but the story is long enough to not feel bitter about the £1.99 after the first go.

BEST FOR: AMATEUR ADVENTURERS



MONKEY DREAMS

PRICE: FREE
FOR: IOS/ANDROID

4 Like *Robot Unicorn Attack 2*, this is another endless runner set in a dreamscape, only this time you are in the subconscious of a sleepy monkey. The controls are pretty simple: tap the screen to make Sleepy Monkey fly higher, and remove your finger to make him fall. The aim of the game is simply to stop him waking up. *Monkey Dream* is worth downloading just for the artwork, to be honest – the landscapes are vibrant, beautiful and endless.

BEST FOR: FAST FINGERS

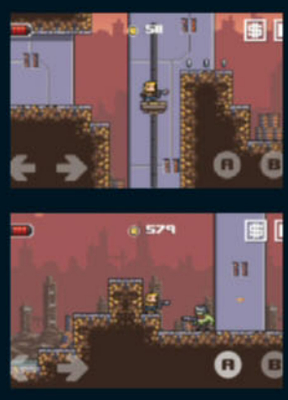


RANDOM HEROES 2

PRICE: FREE
FOR: IOS/ANDROID

5 If *Random Heroes* seemed a bit stingy in length and extras, the sequel has doubled up, with more weapons, more levels, more characters and more aliens. Improvements also include the ability to aim a weapon. It may seem trivial, but it really makes shooting aliens seem like a lot less of a faff. If you want upgrades like weapons and costumes there's an option for in-app purchases, but paying isn't necessary – you can re-do levels over and over to stock up your coin supply.

BEST FOR: RETRO GAMERS



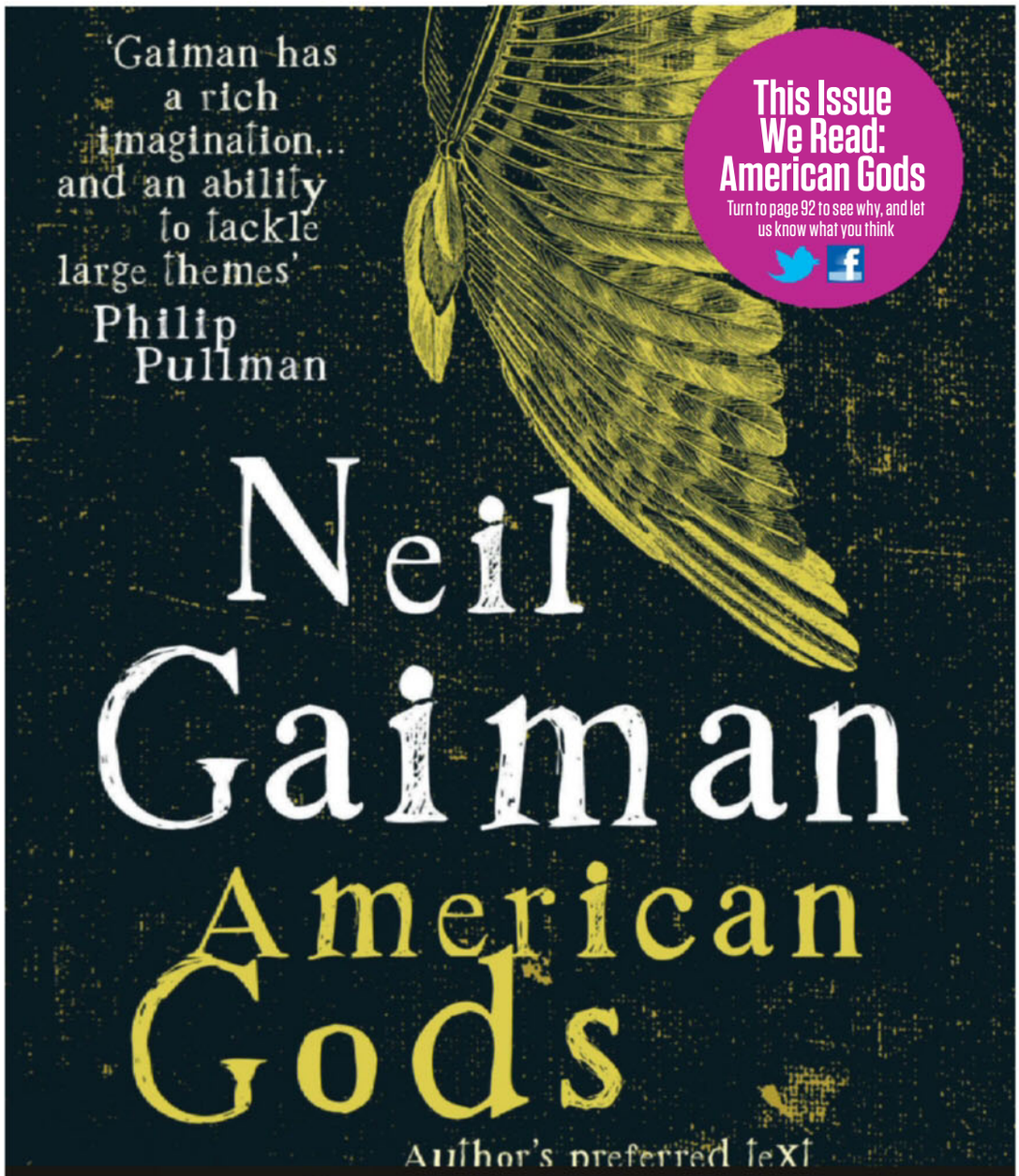
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This Issue We Read: American Gods
Turn to page 92 to see why, and let us know what you think

Next We'll Be Reading: The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier & Clay



1 Pick up *The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon, the classic homage to the Golden Age of comics, warts and all.

2 Follow SciFiNow on Twitter. Read and share your thoughts with the hashtag #BookClub; they might make it into the magazine!

3 You can contribute to the Book Club discussions as much or as little as you like; the most important thing is that you have fun.

4 Pick up issue 99 of SciFiNow to check out what we thought and learn about the history of the book and its author with our Essential Read.

FEATURES

92 Essential Read: American Gods
How Neil Gaiman went it alone and created an all-encompassing masterpiece in the process.

96 A Beginner's Guide: Angela Carter
The pick of the work of the much-referenced and even more missed innovator of magical realism.

106 Kelley Armstrong
The *Bitten* author talks *Visions*, the second in her *Cainsville* series.

REVIEWS

98 The Iron Trial
99 Gleam
99 The Mirror Empire
100 The Relic Guild
100 Age Of Iron
102 Bête
102 Conquest
104 Battling Boy: The Rise Of Aurora West
105 Disenchanted

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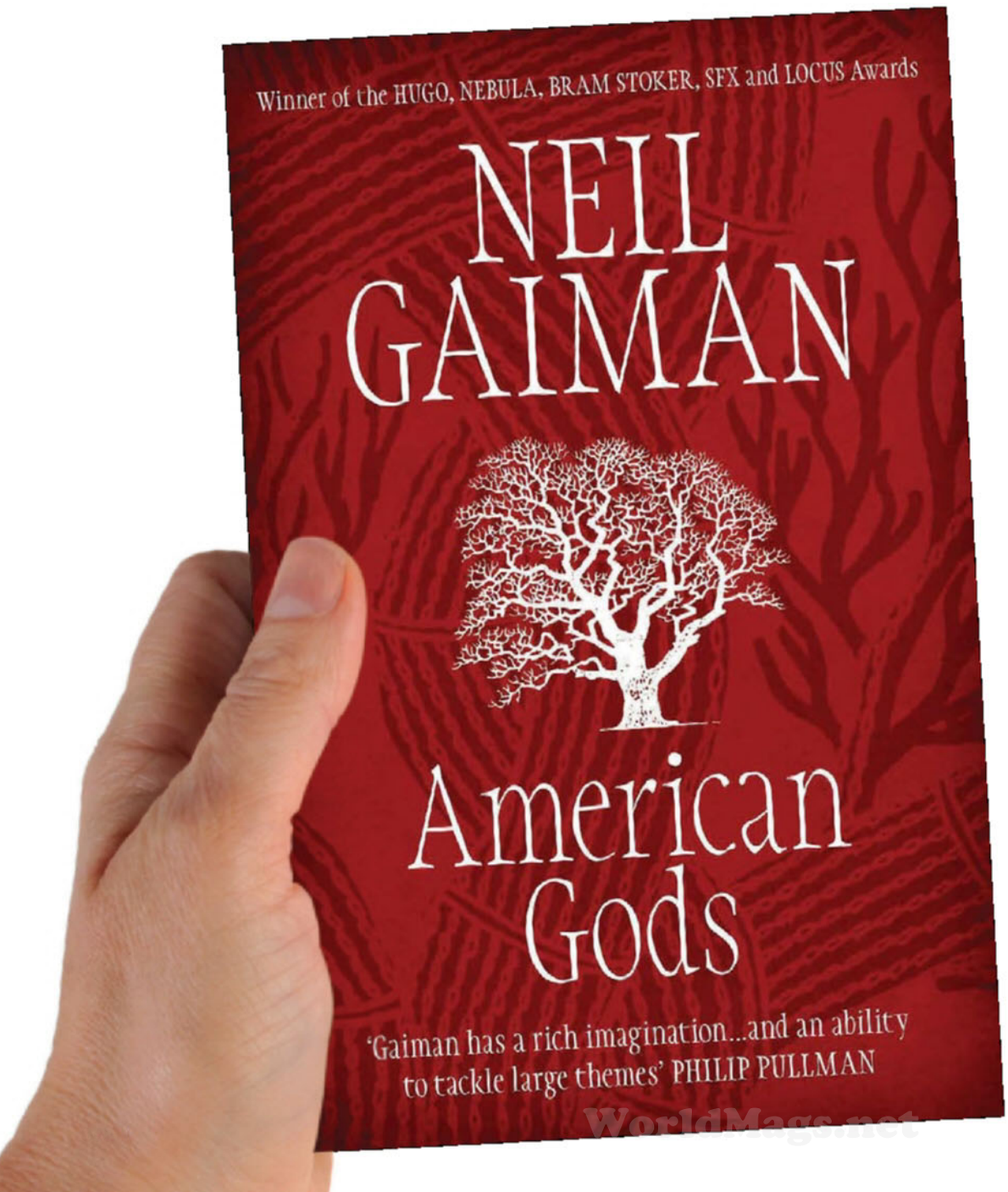
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WORDS
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ESSENTIAL READ: AMERICAN GODS

PART SCIENCE FICTION, PART FANTASY, PART HORROR, PART FACT, PART FICTION, PART ROAD TRIP, PART MYTHOLOGICAL MENAGERIE – AMERICAN GODS IS NEIL GAIMAN AT HIS UNDEFINABLE BEST…



There was a time when Neil Gaiman had yet to become an inescapable fact of pop-cultural life – before *The Graveyard Book*, before memorable episodes of *Doctor Who* and before skilful adaptations of *Coraline* and *Stardust*. Sure, Gaiman's inspirational take on *The Sandman* has been loved and enjoyed since the day the first issue hit comic shops in January 1989, but by a far smaller and stranger audience than that which continues to buy its various collected volumes even now. These days, Gaiman describes his target audience as "bipeds", for there may be no social or economic group in existence that at least one of his stories couldn't reach.

"I exist at the intersection of a dozen Venn diagrams," he told *CNN* in 2001. Since then, that number may well have doubled, or perhaps even tripled.

At the end of the Nineties, however, Gaiman was nagged by the sense that his talents were still unrealised. His seven-year run on *The Sandman* had received as much praise as any comic since Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, but it was still widely regarded as merely the tallest spire in a creative ghetto. He had three novels to his name, but felt unable to claim them as his own first novel for three distinct reasons: *Good Omens* was co-authored with Terry Pratchett, with the more experienced writer very much taking the lead; *Neverwhere*

SYNOPSIS



Until that moment, nothing even remotely fantastic had ever happened to Shadow. His troubled life had led to a spell in prison, and his long-awaited release was preceded by the sudden and senseless death of his wife Laura in a car accident. As his term ends, Shadow is spat out into the world that had always caused him so much trouble, only now he is alone.

Until, that is, the moment he meets Mr Wednesday, an enigmatic conman seeking a bodyguard as he tracks down some old acquaintances. As he travels the USA on his new assignment, Shadow comes to realise that Wednesday and his bizarre cohort are, in fact, gods, abandoned by their immigrant believers in favour of new idols: television, transport, and other transient symbols of modernity. There is a war coming between the old gods and the new, and Shadow is caught in the middle whether he likes it or not.

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Gaiman relocates old world gods to the heart of Americana.

Issue 100's Essential Read: The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier & Clay
Join in and share your thoughts on Twitter or Facebook

was a novelisation of a script Gaiman had written for a BBC miniseries; and *Stardust*, while published as a novel, had been conceived and planned as a comic. The time had come for Gaiman to flex his literary muscles and establish just how good a writer he really was.

That book would turn out to be *American Gods*, a departure from his previous work in a variety of ways that really laid the founding stones for the Neil Gaiman we know today. A fanciful tale of an abnormal world encountered by a very normal character, with passages of endearing whimsy balanced against equally effective scenes of brutish reality; flitting from genre to genre without ever really settling on any one in particular, all underpinned by a respect for the timeless power of story and myth. He wanted it to be both adult and challenging, and sure enough it was.

"Gods die," Gaiman states boldly in the book's first chapter. "And when they truly die they are unmourned and unremembered. Ideas are more difficult to kill than people, but they can be killed, in the end."

Any book set in the forgotten corners of America that opens with statements like that is bound to turn a few heads, but it would be unkind to accuse Gaiman of sensationalism. Attempting to draw direct links between an artist's upbringing and their creative work is always a precarious business, but it can be safely said that as a child, Gaiman had an unusual relationship with religion. Raised by a Jewish family in the predominantly Christian landscape of England in the Sixties, he was exposed to the gods, prophets and stories of both faiths. By the end of the decade, however, his father had become a prominent

"IDEAS ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO KILL THAN PEOPLE, BUT THEY CAN BE KILLED, IN THE END" NEIL GAIMAN

member of a new religion based on a book by a former science fiction author: L Ron Hubbard's *Dianetics*, one of the key texts of the Church of Scientology. To the young Gaiman it was just one more set of stories, but it quickly became apparent that the world at large had the propensity to see it differently. In 1968, Gaiman was refused entry to the Fonthill School in East Grinstead, Sussex on the grounds of his father's involvement with Scientology. What people chose to believe, it seemed, was a powerful force in any direction.

Did those early encounters with the shift between old and new systems of belief plant the seed that would ultimately develop into *American Gods*? It is hard to say, not least because Scientology is perhaps the only subject that the normally open and effusive Gaiman takes great pains to avoid. In any case, it would be nearly 30 years before the first flashes of its story began to play on his mind. "It began in May 1997 with an idea that I couldn't get out of my head," he recalled in an essay titled 'All Books Have Gender'. "I'd find myself thinking about it at night in bed before I'd go to sleep, as if I were watching a movie clip in my head. Each night I'd see another couple of minutes of the story."

For many authors, those snatched minutes of inspiration may have been enough to begin a novel in earnest, but if there's one inescapable truth about Neil Gaiman it's that he's never short of ideas. Whatever this story was, it needed a focus – a direction, and that wouldn't arrive for another two years, as Gaiman staggered in a jetlagged haze around Iceland's sleepy little capital, Reykjavik, a much-needed rest forever spoiled by the inescapable light of that country's midnight sun. With time to kill and precious few ways in which to kill it, he wandered into a tourist shop, where he found a diorama depicting the adventures of Leif Erikson, the 10th Century Norse explorer who became the first European to settle in North America.

5 Reasons to read... American Gods

1 It is the first original novel from one of the titans of fantastic fiction. Yes, Gaiman was published, and yes, he had some success, but *American Gods* was the first time he had completed a work as a novel from start to finish.

2 Because your mum probably has. Gaiman has won the Carnegie medal, and wrote two episodes of *Doctor Who*. He's now so far out of the genre ghetto that he can barely even make out its surrounding walls.

3 But your little brother isn't ready for it yet. Gaiman has the enviable knack of writing stories that appeal to all ages, but *American Gods* is an adult tale through and through – one of the few in his catalogue.

4 It may be odd, but Gaiman is actually writing about the real America; the one we never see. There really is a town called Cairo in Illinois, although it probably isn't populated by Egyptian gods.

5 You'll see that there's more to deities than Buddah, Allah and the Holy Ghost. The pantheon of gods across all cultures is wildly diverse, and Gaiman does his level best to capture their vitality and richness.



Gaiman's early relationship with religion dictated his outlook in part.

©Kyle Cassidy

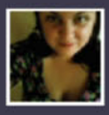
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Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



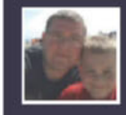
"Magnificent. An all-time classic and one of my favourite novels. #BookClub" **@HarryPigg**



"I did like it. But maybe not as much as his other books. I had trouble understanding some of it. #BookClub" **@EmilyDanielleX**



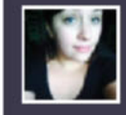
"One of his best novels. A modern masterpiece. #BookClub" **@nexus1979**



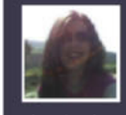
"In a word, brilliant! The closest Gaiman got to the scope & depth of Sandman in his novels. Didn't rate the sequel though.... #BookClub" **@iutley73**



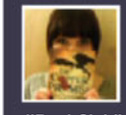
"Loved it, one of the best books I have ever read. Can't wait to see @BryanFuller bring it to life on TV. #BookClub" **@grahamblooming**



"Amazing. Great characters and very compelling read. #BookClub" **@catcatcatswag**



"I loved it, it provides insight into the nature and function of belief while showing how modern life gives rise to new gods #BookClub" **@solarstarchild**



"One of my very favourite books, a story about the very real power of stories. #BookClub" **@sennydreadful**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

"It showed Vinland – northern Canada – and how they believed the original Vikings that went over there travelled," he said in an interview with the BBC's *World Book Club*. "I looked at that and I thought, 'I wonder if they brought their gods with them.' Suddenly, I had a book. Obviously they bought their gods with them, and just as obviously those gods would have been abandoned and left behind."

At the same time, Gaiman was reading a collection of stories featuring 'Jack', the archetypical protagonist of *Jack And The Beanstalk, Jack The Giant Killer, This Is The House That Jack Built* and many others. Just like anyone who spent their childhood in England, Gaiman was very familiar with the *Jack* tales, and he knew them as stories of magic and fantasy. This particular collection, however, was drawn from the rural Appalachia region of the United States, and the more fanciful side had been lost in translation. In that country of immigrants, Gaiman thought, the old gods wouldn't stand a chance.

"I was fascinated by the way that, in America, the magic went away," he continued. "I thought that maybe if America is a country where people do leave that, then these gods are in real trouble. That, I think, was the starting point of the book."



The Norse god Odin lives in considerably less splendor in the New World.

By that time, Gaiman had been living in America for many years – a consequence of his marriage to an American, Mary McGrath, and the desire for their children to spend time with her family. That's why he ended up in the frigid, rural landscape of Wisconsin rather than, say, the traditional media enclaves of Los Angeles and New York City. But there were clear upsides to all those blizzards and long, sub-zero winters – not least the opportunity to live in "an *Addams Family* house."

"You can't get them in England," he told *The Onion* in an interview. "You can get real Tudor houses built by real Tudors in Tudor times, but one thing you can't get is a proper, honest-to-goodness *Addams Family* house. I wanted Victorian Gothic. I wanted proper creepy. I wanted a tower. So I set out to find one, and found one immediately."

That speaks to the most prevalent benefit of Gaiman's new home: it exposed the flaws in the impression of America created by the media products it exports to the world. The average media-literate English person might believe they have a solid grasp of the 'real' America from the ineluctable stream of movies, TV, comics and music, and Gaiman was certainly among them. When he chose Seattle as a key location for *The Sandman*, he was convinced that his portrayal of the city would be accurate on some level.

"I was, of course, wrong," he later admitted in his essay 'How Dare You', which was published to coincide with the publication of *American Gods*. "What I did instead was, in retrospect, much more interesting: I created an America that was entirely imaginary... A delirious, unlikely place out beyond the edge of the real.

"That satisfied me until I came to live in America about eight years ago. Slowly, I realised both that the America I'd been writing was wholly fictional, and that the real America, the one underneath the what-you-see-is-what-you-get surface, was much more interesting than the fictions."

There were aspects of America that you simply couldn't find in the media, but seemed essential to the history of the

"THE AMERICA I'D BEEN WRITING WAS FICTIONAL, AND THE REAL AMERICA WAS MORE INTERESTING"

NEIL GAIMAN

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country as a mish-mash of people from vastly different cultures in vastly different parts of the world. The microcosmic cultures that had evolved to fill in the gaps between those disparate groups was at least curious, often downright bizarre, and only discovered when you got into a car, turned away from the coast and started driving. There are places and traditions in *American Gods* that seem too odd to exist, and yet they do, somewhere out in the enormous sprawl of the real America – shallow replacements for something so much more precious.

"I was trying to describe the experience of coming to America as an immigrant, the experience of watching the way that America tends to eat other cultures," Gaiman said in an interview with *Rain Taxi*. "In America, to quote Michael Moorcock, 'Art aspires to a condition of muzak' – everything homogenises, it blands. I think I was trying to talk about both the blanding [sic] of other cultures, the way the rough edges get knocked off very quickly and the way the things that make them special and unique get forgotten or lost or abandoned or subsumed into the American Dream."

When *American Gods* was finally finished, the publisher deemed the manuscript to be a good bit longer than a writer of Gaiman's standing could justify. Reluctantly, he excised 12,000 words, all the while conscious of the amount of material he had already sacrificed to knock the story into shape. There was much more he could have said about America, and many more gods he could have called upon to help him say it, but as he later described in an interview with the AV Club, for Gaiman that first *American Gods* book was, "just the opening blast of the trumpet."

Now, after more than a decade that featured countless awards, millions of sales and several new art forms encountered and mastered, Gaiman has yet to sound that second trumpet blast – to take on the new gods that have risen up in America since June of 2001. It is a mouth-watering prospect by any measure, but Gaiman has his own ideas about how to keep the audience hungry.

"If *American Gods* had been followed immediately by *British Gods*, or *More American Gods*, or something like that," he said in an interview with *Powells*. "But I'm never really going to be one of those people. I'm going to be the kind of person, if you really like the hamburger one day and you come back, the next thing you'll be served is sushi. And the next thing you'll be served is ice cream."

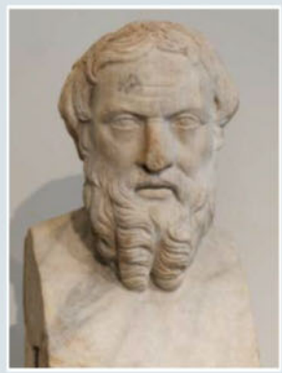
If that isn't another *American Gods*, at the very least it'll be good eating.

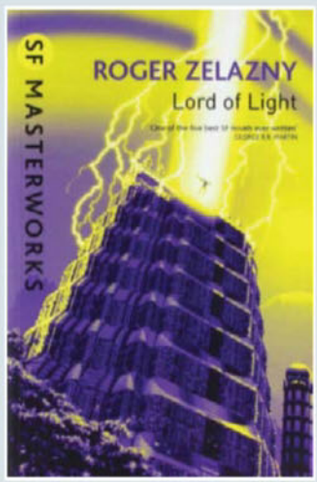
Where Have I Seen This Before?

OF GODS AND MEN

HERODOTUS

Gaiman's true ambition with *American Gods* was to describe a real place at a real point in time, with a healthy dose of fantasy thrown in to push the point. In that sense, it has a lot in common with Herodotus's *The Histories*, a strange combination of apparent fact and blatant fantasy on which much of our knowledge of the ancient world is based.





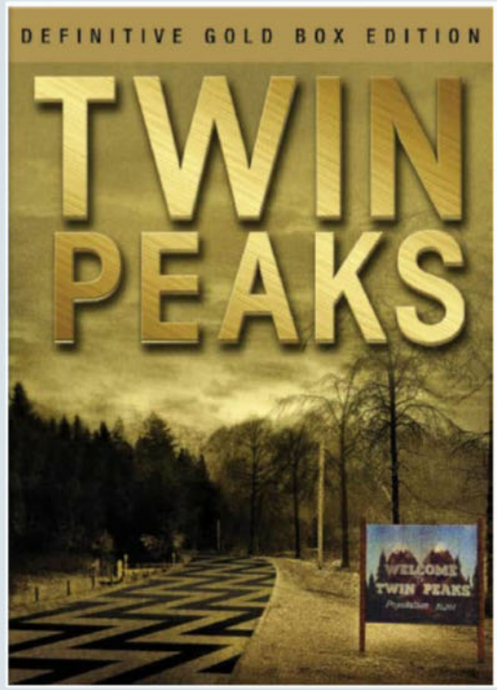
LORD OF LIGHT

When researching prominent authors of fantasy and science fiction, you won't get too far without running into assorted praise or salutations for Roger Zelazny. His 1967 novel *Lord Of Light*, which imagines a future society where people have assumed the identities of Hindu gods, is one of the few genre books to which *American Gods* owes an obvious debt.

THE DARK TOWER

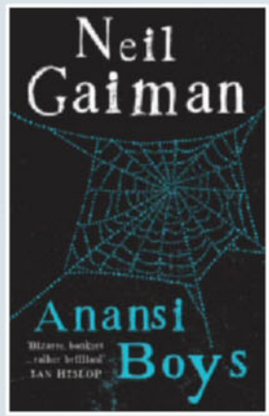
In many ways, *American Gods* is a singular work of fiction: a blend of fact, fantasy, history, myth and a handful of different literary genres. If that strange brew sets your motor running then you might enjoy Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* series, another endearing mongrel that mixes Americana with just about everything else you can mention.





TWIN PEAKS

Between *Blue Velvet* in 1986 and this pioneering TV series in the early Nineties, David Lynch had long since established himself as a master at capturing distinctly American weirdness by the time Gaiman started on *American Gods*. Indeed, Gaiman generally offers an appreciative nod to Lynch whenever he's queried about his inspirations.



ANANSI BOYS

The full sequel to *American Gods* is still to come, but Gaiman's 2005 novel is a spiritual sequel in both tone and the presence of a single character: Mr Nancy, a reincarnation of the African spider god Anansi, a trickster, carouser and all round lover of a good time. Mr Nancy's death triggers the narrative, but he features prominently in *American Gods*.

GOD OF WAR

Sony Santa Monica's smash hit seemed like a breath of fresh air when it was released for the PlayStation 2 in 2005, but in truth it was simply another example of the creative industries tapping the utterly exhausted world of Greek gods for inspiration. *American Gods*' focus on lesser-known deities was intended to be an antidote to that same tendency.



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Which author would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ANGELA CARTER

Turning the fairy tale on its head and challenging taboos

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

With the dark fairy tale currently enjoying a healthy renaissance, it seems only right to pay tribute to the genre's master: the woman who, among many other things, presented a stunning reinvention of these classic stories. She pushed the fairy tales' dark sexuality to the fore, putting a feminist spin on these fables filled with dark, handsome and threatening men, and giving their heroines agency and desire.

To credit her simply for her fairy tales would be to do her a disservice, however. Carter challenged traditional gender roles with fierce passion and originality in both her short stories and novels. She depicted the loss of childhood innocence with heartbreaking effect with *The Magic Toyshop*, as well as creating the joyfully raucous *Nights At The Circus*. She was also an accomplished literary critic (she presented her take on the Marquis de Sade in *The Sadeian Woman And The Ideology Of Pornography*), children's author and screenwriter.

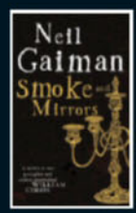
> "CARTER WAS OUTSPOKEN, CONTROVERSIAL AND ADORED"

Carter was born in 1940, and after struggling with anorexia as a teen, studied at Bristol and moved into journalism. She married her first husband in 1960, but after moving to Tokyo in 1969 she had the experiences that would lead her to divorce and fuel for the stories of *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* and *The Infernal Desire Machines Of Doctor Hoffman*. Carter was outspoken, controversial and adored. She wrote the screenplay for *The Company Of Wolves* with director Neil Jordan, as well as the soaring *Nights At The Circus*. In 1992, more PhD funding requests were filed for Angela Carter projects than the 18th Century.

Carter was just 51 when she died of cancer in 1992, but she left behind a tremendous legacy; a trailblazer and fiercely clever writer. The influence of the stories in *The Bloody Chamber*, *The Magic Toyshop* and *Nights At The Circus* can clearly be seen in that of some our finest authors, artists and filmmakers.

Angela's Ashes

FIVE FAIRY TALES THAT OWE A DEBT TO ANGELA CARTER



SNOW, GLASS, APPLES

Neil Gaiman's short story reimagines the *Snow White* story, telling the tale from the point of view of the tragic Queen, who has seen this vampiric creature destroy her land.



POISON

Sarah Pinborough released a trio of reimagined, sexualised fairy-tale novellas based on *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* in 2013 to tremendous effect.



FINGERSMITH

Sarah Waters has written about her love of Angela Carter, and nowhere is her influence more clear on the *Tipping The Velvet* author than her dark coming-of-age tale *Fingersmith*.



BLUEBEARD

Controversial French filmmaker Catherine Breillat is known for smashing taboos, but her films of *Bluebeard* and *Sleeping Beauty* were more restrained, if no less affecting.



GINGER SNAPS

The werewolf myth is given a fierce feminist spin in this 2000 Canadian horror, as Katharine Isabelle enters womanhood after being attacked by a lycanthrope.

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Some of Carter's most popular stories concerned the subversion of existing fairy tales.



Short story 'The Company Of Wolves' was adapted into a feature film, directed by Neil Jordan.



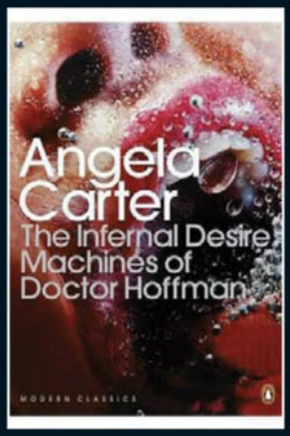
Family values

A young woman finds out who's pulling the strings

THE MAGIC TOYSHOP
Publisher: Virago
Published: 1967
Price: £7.99

After her parents die in a plane crash, Melanie and her younger siblings are sent to live with their puppet-maker uncle Philip and his mute wife Melanie. As Melanie begins a tentative relationship with their son Finn, Philip begins to exert his authority over the family unit, forcing Melanie into his service with violent consequences. Combining kitchen-sink grimness, sexual awakening and ethereal magical realism, this coming-of-age story of adolescence and rebellion is profoundly moving.

"My first Angela Carter. Rich and dark and sinister and features the only man with dirty nails I've ever fancied. #BookClub" **@EwaSR**



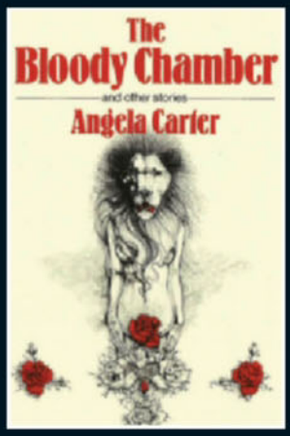
Surreal lives

Choose between dreams and reality

THE INFERNAL DESIRE MACHINES OF DOCTOR HOFFMAN
Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Published: 1972
Price: £9.99

Influenced by Carter's time spent in Japan and observing the traditional gender roles, *The Infernal Desire Machines Of Doctor Hoffman* is the bizarre, surrealist story of a South American country threatened by the titular Faustian doctor, whose machine blurs the line between dreams and reality. It is one of Carter's most divisive novels, with many praising its boldness and technique, while others find it inaccessible and offensive.

"Extravagantly told, examining gender, sex and sexuality in the usual Carter ways! Worth the journey to the end. #BookClub" **@steppenfreak**



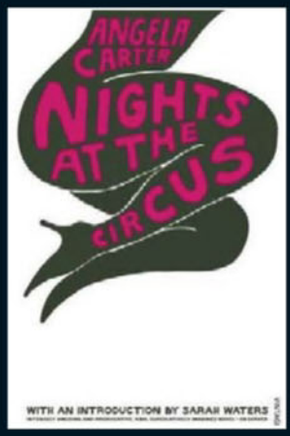
Brave new tales

Role reversals and desire uncovered

THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES
Publisher: Vintage
Published: 1979
Price: £6.99

Arguably the most important work of Carter's career is in the pages of this short-story collection, and they've lost none of their potency. The title story is arguably the most effective, with the *Bluebeard* tale reinvented as a young bride discovering the dark desires of her new husband. The best of the tales see the heroines embrace their sexuality, as 'The Tiger's Bride' has Beauty shedding her skin to uncover her inner beast, and 'The Company Of Wolves' sees the girl seduce the wolf, robbing him of his power.

"Dark, twisted, bloody, brilliantly feminist. Best retelling of fairy tales I've ever read. #BookClub" **@Abby_Chandler**



Taking flight

A travelling circus on a strange journey

NIGHT AT THE CIRCUS
Publisher: Vintage
Published: 1984
Price: £8.99

Nights At The Circus counts as one of Carter's more accessible tales, and this sprawling novel is a strange delight. With jealous tigers, amorous Dukes, murderous clowns and confused outlaws, its world is both utterly fantastical and tempered with tragedy. Even as the characters wonder if Fevvers' wings are real or not, the spiritual, romantic and everyday hardships they face are as much of a fact of their existence as disastrous shows and daring escapes in Fabergé eggs.

"I really enjoyed it, read it a couple of years ago now. I loved the extraordinary tale that winds and spins to its conclusion. #BookClub" **@Cascararogue**



Life is sweet

It's all in the dance

WISE CHILDREN
Publisher: Vintage
Published: 1992
Price: £8.99

Carter knew she was dying when she started on *Wise Children*, and there's a sweetness and tenderness to her Shakespeare-infused final novel. It opens on the 75th birthday of identical twins Dora and Nora Chance, and the 100th birthday of their father Melchior and his twin Peregrine. The relationship between the sisters, as well as other romantic and familial relationships, are called into question but rarely clarified, and the novel closes with a beautiful happy ending and the final line, "What a joy it is to dance and sing!"

"It's probably Angela Carter's best book. Dry and funny and smart and SO good. #BookClub" **@ActuallyAisha**

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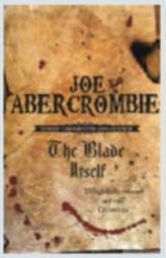
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Your Five Magic Users

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



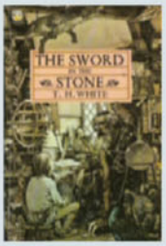
1. Storm Front
Jim Butcher
"Got to be Harry Dresden, Wizard PI, he's in the phonebook and he's awesome! #BookClub"
@The_LizMarshall



2. The Blade Itself
Joe Abercrombie
"Bayaz from @LordGrimdark *First Law* series. Cos he is everything the stereotypical wizard is not! #BookClub" **@sjfreeman1**



3. The Colour Of Magic
Terry Pratchett
"Rincewind, of course. Saves the world through cowardice and a half brick in a sock. Finest wizard ever! #BookClub"
@HokusBloke



4. The Sword In The Stone
TH White
"I have to say Merlin since that's what I'm naming my son. Besides that I really like Madam Mim from The Sword in the Stone. #BookClub" **@geekbydefault**



5. Equal Rites
Terry Pratchett
"I like Granny Weatherwax cuz she's good at headology. #BookClub"
@SometimeSpez

Details **Authors:** Cassandra Clare, Holly Black **Publisher:** Doubleday **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

THE IRON TRIAL (MAGISTERIUM BOOK 1)

Accio a more original plot?

Cassandra Clare is already inextricably linked with the *Harry Potter* franchise. Before she published any original writing, she was well known in the fan-fiction community for her *Draco* trilogy – a Malfoy-centric *Harry Potter* saga – and her own *Mortal Instruments* series has drawn criticism for being similar to JK Rowling's work. So it's unfortunate that *The Iron Trial*, the first in a planned five-book collaboration with fellow YA author Holly Black, is also distinctly *Potter*-flavoured.

Callum Hunt, *The Iron Trial*'s 12-year-old protagonist, is a stroppy kid with messy black hair and scars. Brought up by a single father after his mother was killed by an evil mage, Call has been warned against magic all his life. But despite trying to fail the entrance exam, he gets accepted into the Magisterium, and is taken on as an apprentice to the most powerful magician of the lot. Once he's there, Call starts to enjoy magic. Inevitably, though, there's a secret his dad never told him about his mum's murder, and it links him with the story's villain, the Enemy of Death.

> "IF YOU SQUINT, THIS COULD ALMOST BE A RETELLING OF THE HARRY POTTER STORY"

If you squint, this could almost be a retelling of the *Harry Potter* story with a brattier hero. There are some twists along the way, but they feel like knowing subversions of the story you're expecting rather than organic developments in a new tale. Call isn't an endearing protagonist, and he doesn't feel like an authentic 12-year-old. Clare and Black have both demonstrated a knack for writing sparky teenage girls in their previous books, but their pre-teen characters here are kind of boring.

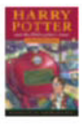
It doesn't help that there isn't much story for the first two thirds; page after page is devoted to setting out how different the Magisterium is from Hogwarts. Some of the background is interesting, like the evil, Chaos-ridden animals with their swirling eyes, but too much of it is tediously familiar, like the headmaster's office with its array of magical gadgets and gizmos.

There's just way too much attention paid to irrelevant details when nothing happens for chapters at a stretch. Perhaps they're too dazzled by their surroundings, or maybe they're just children, but the characters are often frustratingly slow on the uptake.

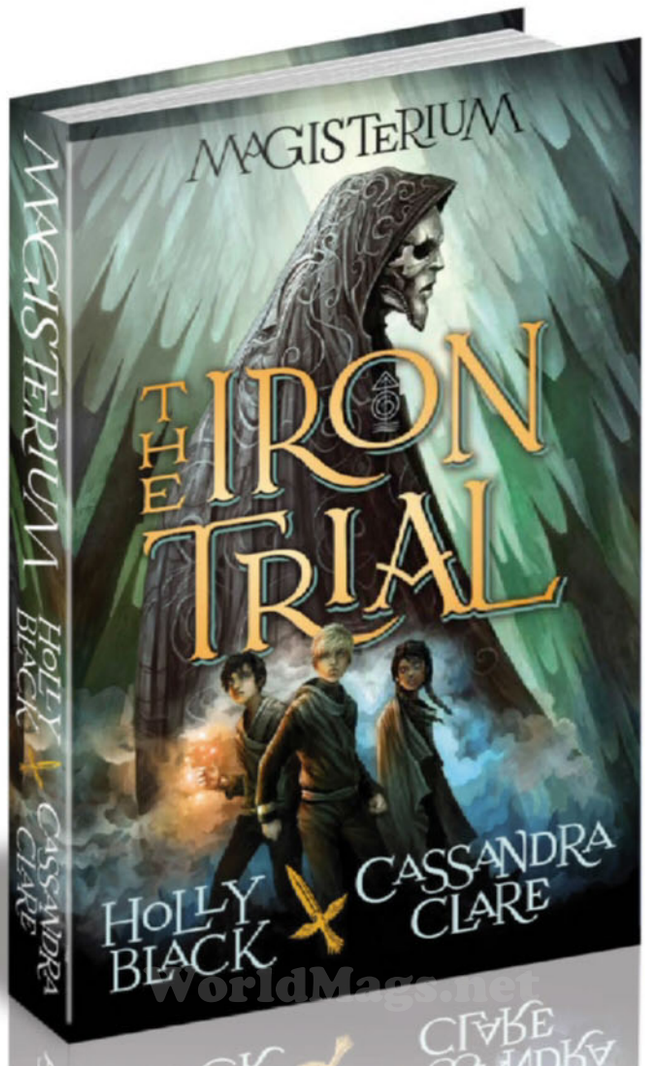
Obviously, the idea is that the characters and their relationships will develop, but if you want readers to sign up for a five-book series, the first one needs to make that commitment worthwhile. *The Iron Trial* doesn't. It's a slog to get through, and while the final twist is kind of interesting, it's too little too late. If all you really want is to read an alternate-universe *Harry Potter* story – well, the internet's full of them.

Sarah Dobbs

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone
JK Rowling
It's obvious, but it is very similar to *The Iron Trial*. And better.



WorldMags.net

Details **Author:** Tom Fletcher **Publisher:** Jo Fletcher (Quercus) **Price:** £18.99 **Released:** Out now

GLEAM

Sex, mushrooms and rock n' roll. Basically

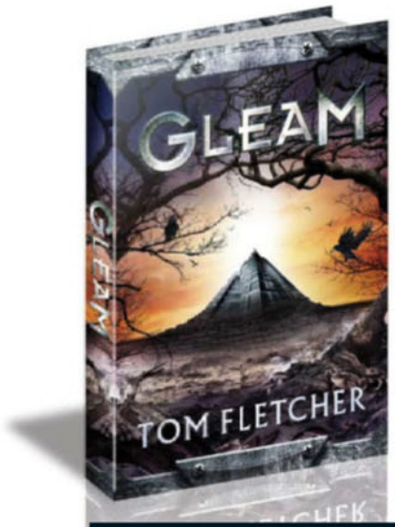
SciFiNow Must read now!

If you imagine Al Pacino in *Scarface* at the Mad Hatter's tea party, you're about halfway to understanding *Gleam*'s plot.

Part one of the *Factory* trilogy explores the lead character's expulsion from the Pyramid – a haven of wealth and safety – to the Discard, filled with horror and crime. In an attempt to save his family, the protagonist must bribe the Arbritrators with the *Gleam* equivalent of cocaine: mushrooms. This leads to a quest through the Discard, with the lead character performing music, making love and getting wasted to get by.

It's an interesting story, which in turn deserves interesting characters. Fletcher supplies these in abundance, with a variety of fascinating characters possessing equally curious names. It seems a bit daft, then, that our brazen protagonist goes by the moniker of 'Alan'. It's almost comic – and at times rather off-putting – that such an ordinary-sounding character is bedding the baddie, stealing from her and being stalked by a Clawbaby.

Disconcertion over his name aside, the plot is incredibly engaging, with wit and dry humour woven throughout. Tom Fletcher intersperses potentially tedious moments with comedic timing from animated characters, and it really adds to the story. On top of this, there's true passion in every written word, particularly in scenes where Alan performs with his band. Their tension and nerves are almost tangible, and there's a real sense of euphoria when the performances begin.



"THERE'S TRUE PASSION IN EVERY WRITTEN WORD"

There's certainly no faulting Fletcher. With such deep characters and a storyline that promises more in its sequels, *Gleam* is definitely not one to discard.

Philippa Grafton

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Handmaid's Tale
Margaret Atwood
A dystopian classic exploring the ruling class of a divided society and the associated oppression.

Writer: Kameron Hurley **Publisher:** Angry Robot **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

THE MIRROR EMPIRE

The close-minded need not apply

SciFiNow Must read now!



As the star of Para rises above the Mirror Empire, the magic used to fuel everything from warfare to simple daily tasks is changing. With an invasion on the horizon, Lilia, crippled at a young age, may be able to find her mother's kidnappers after years of waiting. Meanwhile, Ahkio, a relative of royalty, finds himself thrust into the spotlight.

From page one, Hurley thrusts the reader into a world that is alien to our own. Characters practice unsettling magic fuelled by a combination of stars in ascendance and their own blood, yet somehow remain relatable.

What really elevates Hurley's writing, though, isn't the story, the characters or even her writing prowess; it's the issues that she tackles through it. The society depicted in *The Mirror Empire* is polygamous and gender-fluid, but without Hurley spotlighting it as shocking or bizarre. It simply exists, taking the gutsy move of tackling sexuality and gender as the internet age gives more prominence to prejudices against trans individuals.

The only thing letting the novel down is impenetrability – Hurley invests so much effort into the culture the novel focuses on that religions, roles and even character names can become incomprehensible, making re-reading a frequent necessity.

But this barely qualifies as criticism. All great art should be challenging, and *The Mirror Empire* is the quintessential example of that: a work that's nothing short of remarkable.

Gareth Hughes

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

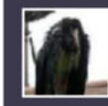
The Alchemist
Paulo Coelho
Another allegorical story starring a quiet, unprepossessing protagonist.

YOUR READS

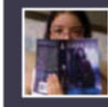
What you lot have been reading this month



"I am reading the *iZombie* comics by Chris Roberson and Michael Allred, I am really enjoying them. #BookClub" **@quidditysea**



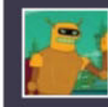
"I'm reading *High Rise*, ready for the movie. I like JG Ballard. He's grim #BookClub" **@TheCrowLady**



"At the moment, *The Bullet-Catcher's Daughter* by @RodDuncan. Enjoying it very much! #BookClub" **@EffingRainbow**



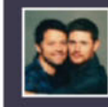
"*Words Of Radiance* by Brandon Sanderson, and it is the best book of the year! #BookClub" **@_readerz**



"I'm reading *The Wise Man's Fear* by Patrick Rothfuss, enjoying it so far. #BookClub" **@HannahChapter1**



"Philip K Dick's *The Penultimate Truth*, about the fourth time I've read it. One of his underrated books in my opinion. #BookClub" **@mockery66**



"*Deep Blue* by Jennifer Donnelly; didn't realise it's a Disney book. Full of mermaid clichés, having a hard time getting through it. #BookClub" **@grahamblooming**



"I read *Broken Monsters* by @laurenbeukes (loved it – it's creepy) and *Black Swan Green* by @david_mitchell (liked it) #BookClub" **@MrsHirez**



"Picked up volumes nine and 10 of *Scalped* at the weekend. It's been a long journey, took a while to get going too, but sad to finish it. #BookClub" **@neil_bomb**



"Re-reading *A Deepness In The Sky* by Vernor Vinge. One of the greatest sci-fi books ever written. Can't recommend it enough. #BookClub" **@Tim_McNulty**



"*Age Of Iron* by Angus Watson. Gritty, violent fantasy – can't put it down! #BookClub" **@WondrousReads**

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook

60 SECONDS WITH

Darren Shan



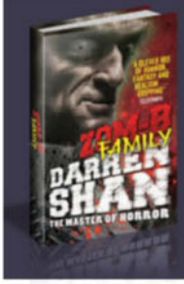
What was the initial impetus behind the *Zom-B* series?
In the wake of 9/11 and the bombing of London, I wanted to write a book that tackled the issue of racism and highlighted how dangerous it is to follow the lead of fearmongers. I wanted to warn young readers that no matter how dangerous and worrying the times, if we follow the path of hatred and retaliation we will become as monstrous as those we stand against. But I didn't want to do that in a preachy way, and zombies seemed like a perfect match!

What can you tell us about *Zom-B Family*?
I can't talk about it too much without giving loads of plot spoilers away. What I can say is that it's set in the ruins of Battersea Power Station, and it involved the main character, B Smith, facing probably her most challenging and painful trials yet. It's an uncomfortable read, yet one that's sadly all too timely.

"CHILDREN ARE MUCH MORE AWARE THAN WE GIVE THEM CREDIT FOR"

How aware are you of your YA audience?
I'm always aware that I'm writing for a pre-adult audience. But I think children are much more aware of what's going on in the world than we sometimes give them credit for, and it's important that we seek to engage with them and openly urge them to reflect on issues like racism, war and torture. I listen to my gut, as well as the feedback from my agents and editors. In 15 years I've never been accused of having gone too far for a general audience – there's never been any real public controversy about my work.

You address important social issues. Was that part of the idea for the series?
I think horror is a great way to reflect on the troubles of the world. I don't think too many readers want to spend their time mulling over the complexities of the Middle East or the so-called War On Terror. But it's important that we engage with such issues, study our society and draw our own conclusions. Horror and fantasy are ways to do that and have fun at the same time.



More than anything, I hope my *Zom-B* books entertain, which is the main draw for those who read them.

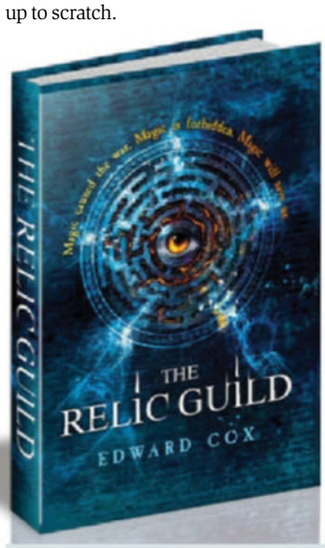
Zom-B Family by Darren Shan is available on 25 September from Simon & Schuster Childrens Books.

Details **Writer:** Edward Cox **Publisher:** Gollancz **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

THE RELIC GUILD

Pick up the pace

With a whole new premise, history and set of antagonistic creatures to explore, it's clear that plenty of thought went into *The Relic Guild*'s conception. It's just a shame that the execution isn't quite up to scratch.



An extremely slow starter, too many chapters are dedicated to history lessons, scene setting and character building. Although it improves in this regard somewhat later on, the protagonists are initially tough to warm to. Part-time prostitute, part-time wolf Clara is ridden with attitude, while elderly bounty hunter Sam oozes negative energy, delivering little more than criticisms and complaints, which makes intelligent Van Bam the most likeable of the three – although with a name like that, it's tough not to smile every time his dialogue crops up.

The antagonists are a little theatrical; repeatedly cracking evil, sadistic grins, as well as possessing a craving for human flesh and a tendency to hire uneducated humans as minions. Fortunately, there are a few chilling and gruesome scenes that help pick up the narrative, like the instance when a zombie-like virus infects the inmates of an asylum.

From then on, things start to improve. Characters begin to show emotion, the level of action remains consistently high, and huge time jumps add context, although they aren't as smooth as they could be, making it hard to follow to begin with.

The prose is also well written; the second half flows nicely, gripping your attention as the finale approaches. It's here, however, where things dip again. Just as loose ends tie up, others re-open, and the realisation that there's only a matter of pages left hits. The conclusion is anything but conclusive, leaving plenty of unanswered questions, the most crucial being whether you will stay for part two.

Rowena Heal

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

City Of Bones
Cassandra Clare
As Clara starts seeing the supernatural, she uncovers a darker side to New York.

Details **Author:** Angus Watson **Publisher:** Orbit **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

AGE OF IRON

A riveting read

A big lug with an axe and a badger fixation, a beautiful but deadly archer and a mysterious and precocious little girl make up the main party of *Age Of Iron*; it's already safe to say that it offers no surprises.

But then again, we weren't expecting any – we went into *Age Of Iron* wanting to find battles, subterfuge, sex, conflicted good guys and relentlessly, inexplicably evil bad guys. That's what you get, and it's none the worse for it, while the depiction of Iron Age Britain on the cusp of a full-scale Roman invasion – an era we know very little about – feels surprisingly believable.

Certain writers use modern language to connect readers to their world through the occasional swear-word or a clear allegory to a modern-day situation. Not too heavy-handed for the most part; just enough to do its job. However, here, where the setting is so well realised and the characters grounded, the constant reminders of modern-day phrases and practices are too jarring. Author Angus Watson also clearly wants to make badger-based cursing its thing, but like *Mean Girls*' 'fetch', the more these kind of awkward phrases are used, the more they stick out.

Despite this, *Age Of Iron* does what it does well. It's still captivating, though the action and plot progress so quickly that both can sometimes feel rushed. The final quarter in particular ramps up to an overwhelming pace, with some great characters hastily introduced and then sadly made little of. But this is an excellent



first book, and as back-handed a compliment as that sounds, we're looking forward to the next instalment in the trilogy.

If you've run out of Joe Abercrombie books and don't mind a good helping of badger's bollocks with your genre fiction, then we heartily recommend it.

Rebecca Richards

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Blade Itself
Joe Abercrombie
More intricate, but if you like one then the other will serve as lighter/darker reading.

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"THE BEST WEREWOLF NOVELS I VE READ IN YEARS!" ★★★★★

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AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON MEETS TRAINSPOTTING

SAY HELLO TO DOGSTAR PETE. SINK ESTATE DRUGGIE TURNED WEREWOLF THIEF. HE'S GOT A NICE LINE IN ROBBING DEALERS, STASHING CASH AND PLANNING FOR HIS GET-OUT-OF-LONDON... UNTIL HE FINDS HE'S NOT THE ONLY DOG IN TOWN

OUT NOW



THE HUNGER GAMES MEETS THE HOWLING

IT'S FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER DOGSTAR. THE WORLD'S GONE TO THE DOGS. AMY'S SCRATCHING OUT A LIVING, SCAVENGING BY DAY AND LAYING LOW BY NIGHT. BUT WHEN SHE PICKS A FIGHT WITH THE WRONG PACK, SHE KNOWS THINGS'LL HAVE TO CHANGE ...

OUT NOW



MAD MAX MEETS THE WOLF MAN

IT'S LOOKING A LOT LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD BUT, WHILE LONDON BURNS, SOMETHING'S STIRRING BENEATH THE STREETS. THE DOGSTAR'S BACK, AND NOW HE'S GOT A REAL FIRE IN HIS BELLY...

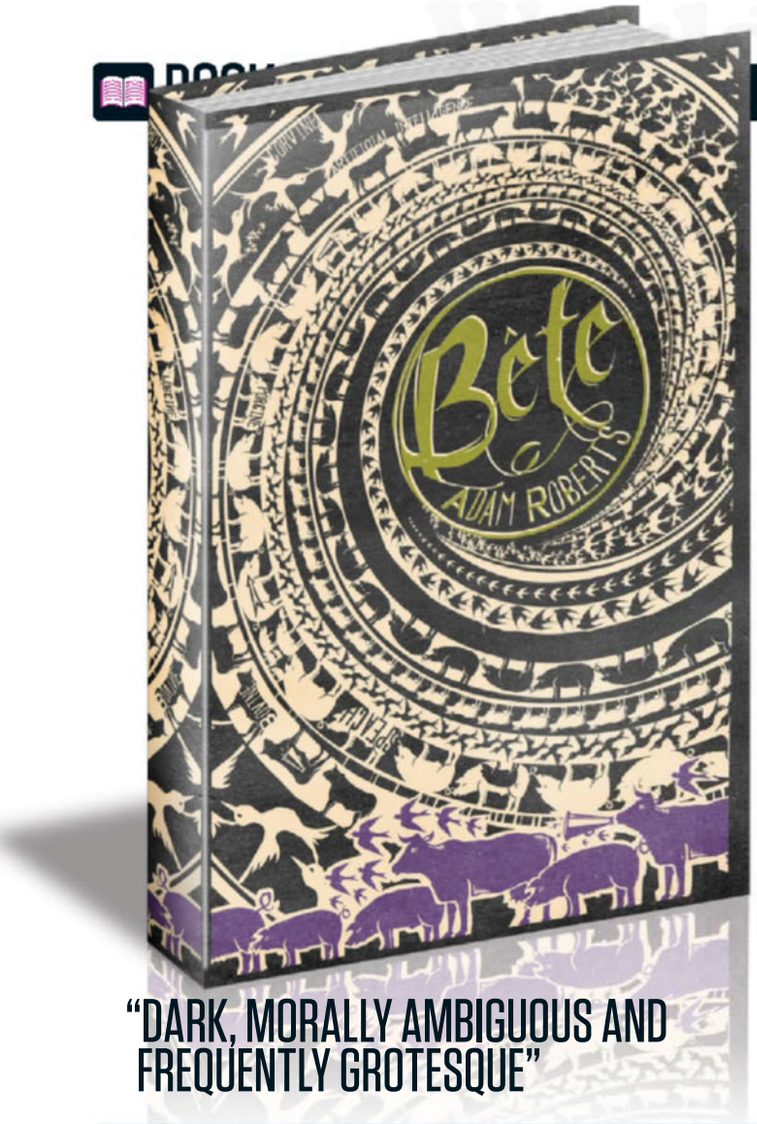
COMING SOON

"LIKE IRVINE WELSH AND ANTHONY BURGESS SPENT A WEEKEND IN A BEDSIT BINGE READING ANNE RICE NOVELS, HIGH ON COCAINE AND LAXATIVES, AND DECIDED TO GO ONE BETTER. LOVE IT!" ★★★★★

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"DARK, MORALLY AMBIGUOUS AND FREQUENTLY GROTESQUE"

Details **Writer:** Adam Roberts **Publisher:** Gollancz **Price:** £18.99 **Released:** 25 September

BÊTE

The animal country

SciFiNow Must read now!

Bête sets up a simple scenario: what if animals had AI chips embedded in them, enabling them to speak?

At the centre of Adam Roberts' novel is foul-mouthed, cynical farmer Graham Penhaligon, whose life is upended after it's revealed that animal-rights activists have inserted artificial-intelligence chips into thousands of animals, both wild and farmed, sparking a revolution in thinking about animals as people. What follows is dark, morally ambiguous and frequently grotesque.

Roberts engages in a sort-of discussion with the reader on the nature of not just animal rights, but the very definition of intelligence, through Graham's character. While much of it feels connected to the story and pertinent, it does flirt with intellectual navel-gazing at times, which slightly diminishes its impact.

The science behind the animal AI is completely secondary to the social and personal implications of its introduction to Britain. Through Graham's eyes we witness the almost imperceptible but – if Roberts is to be believed – inevitable collapse of society, most potent in evocative scenes of an abandoned Wokingham and the overcrowded streets of a walled-in Reading.

Graham's farmer-turned-pariah-turned-vagrant is the beating heart of the story. Even when the narrative seems to be idling ('seems' being the operative word here) his internal narration, often directed straight at the reader, keeps *Bête*'s engine running. His relationship with human Anne and cat Cincinnatus is especially well constructed and aids the story's finale immensely, which seamlessly blends a fate-of-a-country climax with passages of prosaic beauty, resulting in a truly thought-provoking read. Also, the stunning cover design must be commended.

Erlingur Einarsson

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Children Of Men
PD James
Quite different from the film adaptation, James' post-apocalyptic Britain is bleak but extremely powerful reading.

Details **Authors:** John Connolly, Jennifer Ridyard **Publisher:** Headline **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

CONQUEST

Resistance is futile – or is it?

SciFiNow Must read now!

As if adolescence wasn't trying enough, imagine dealing with raging hormones while residing on a planet that your father helped invade, where the locals are hostile and freedom exists only in the imagination. Such is life for Syl, the first of the Illyri to be born on Earth and subsequently cooped up in Edinburgh Castle as her alien race takes control of the planet and the human race.

Not content with confinement, Syl learns how to pass herself off as a human and makes the occasional secret excursion from the castle. On her 16th birthday, Syl gets an unexpected present, as one of her excursions leads her directly into the path of Paul Kerr, a dedicated – and handsome – member of the Resistance.

While this boy-meets-girl/alien-meets-human storyline may seem formulaic, Syl and Paul's meeting is merely the catalyst for the explosive events that follow. There is just about the right level of gruesomeness for the young adult target market and a mild whiff of romance for good balance.

However, what will hold interest is the mystery surrounding the true purpose of the invasion. Internal politics and bickering divide the Illyri, and the introduction of a spooky sisterhood reminiscent of the Sibylline of David Tennant-era *Doctor Who* poses the question of who the puppet master really is.

Being the first book in the *Chronicles Of The Invaders* series, *Conquest* does need time to warm up the reader, and in that respect is a little slow to get going. Meeting many of the Illyri, working out how to pronounce their names and what faction they belong to takes time, but is worth the effort and ultimately paves the way for some serious character bonding.

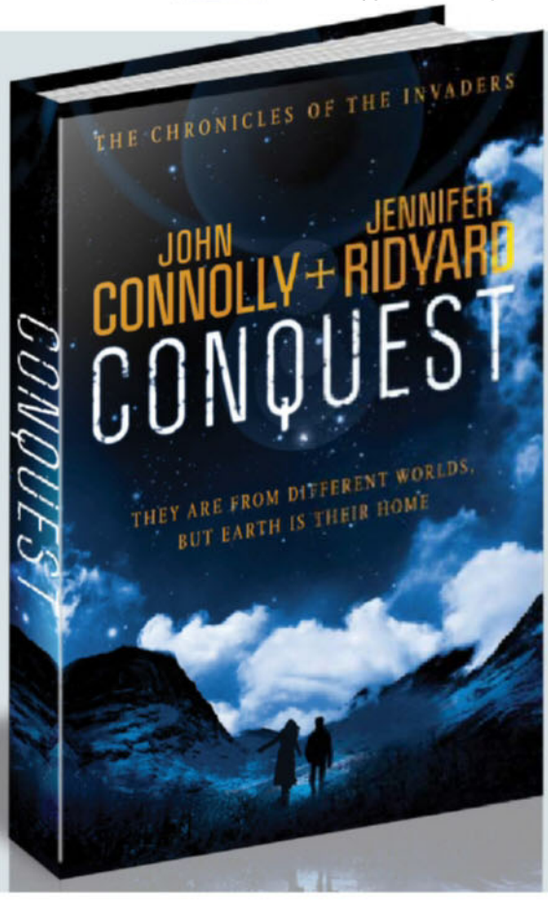
Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The 5th Wave
Rick Yancey
Billions of humans have been wiped out, and aliens have the upper hand on Earth.



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FANTASTIC FICTION

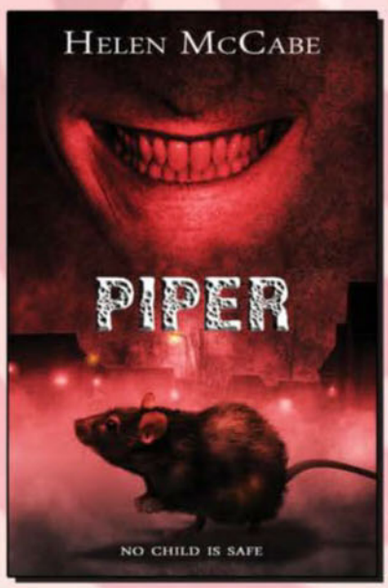


Available now: *What's Dead Pussykat* (£12.99 978-1-84583-098-4), a tale of vampires, gargoyles, faith and farce from the author of *Zombies at Tiffany's* and *Kat on a Hot Tin Airship*.

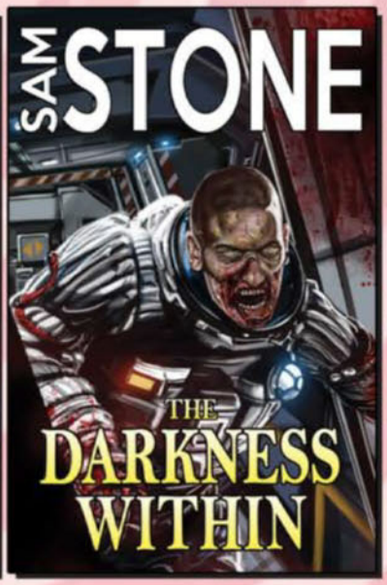
Other titles include *Captains Stupendous* (£12.99 978-1-84583-886-7), a brilliant slice of thought-provoking and engaging fiction from the master, Rhys Hughes.

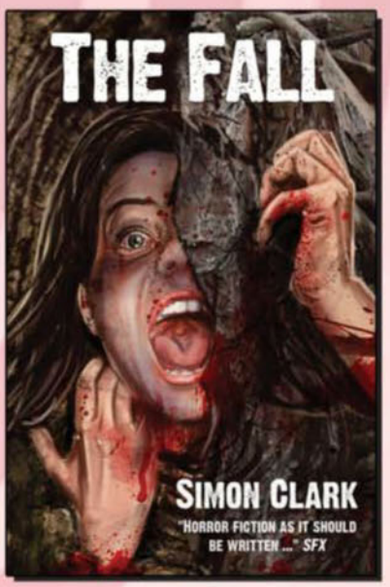
We have many other cult television and film titles available - visit the website for sale prices!











Also available for pre-order: Sam Stone's *Jinx Town* (£12.99 978-1-84583-096-0) - The first in a trilogy of high-impact science-fiction horror novels. One woman battles to survive when an aggressive alien race invades the world, leaving destruction in their wake, and stealing the womenfolk back to their own planet via a powerful and space-bending portal.

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TELOS PUBLISHING

WorldMags.net

Details **Writer:** Paul Pope **Artist:** Paul Pope
Publisher: First Second **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** 1 October

BATTLING BOY: THE RISE OF AURORA WEST

Hear me roar



Paul Pope has grasped the golden rule of writing for young people: don't patronise them.

The critically acclaimed writer and artist behind *Batman: Year 100* has followed up his Jack Kirby-flavoured first chapter in 2013's *Battling Boy* not with a direct sequel, but a prequel in chronology and sidequel in content. It follows the origin story of the show-stopping, gun-toting action girl Aurora 'Roar' West, who burst into the final pages of the first volume as the more experienced and driven antithesis to Battling Boy's naive demigod.

Co-written with screenwriter/director JT Petty and drawn by the almost dreamlike and cartoonish David Rubin, *The Rise Of Aurora West* is a mix of Golden Age pulp and young-adult tragedy as Aurora's happy childhood is snatched away when monsters kill her mother, turning her monster-hunting science hero father Haggard West into obsessive and emotionally isolated ersatz Batman, his view of his daughter coming dangerously close to that scene in *The Dark Knight Returns* where Bruce cradles young Robin Carrie Kelley, muttering, "Good soldier, good soldier."

It's extremely powerful stuff, and some of the simple devices, like the flashback to Mama West showing her with the sun passing behind her, creating a halo that obscures her features but leaves a sense of warmth at odds with much of Aurora's interactions with her father. It's one of the few times he's seen smiling too.

There's no shortage of young female characters in YA fiction who struggle to reconcile their role in the world and the expectation of their parents with their own desires and impulses, finding themselves privy to secrets that take them further and further from the former. In comics, however, there's still plenty of fertile soil to be tilled.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Hawkeye: LA Woman
Matt Fraction/Annie Wu
Kate Bishop, the other Hawkeye, heads to LA to solve crime and have the best time.

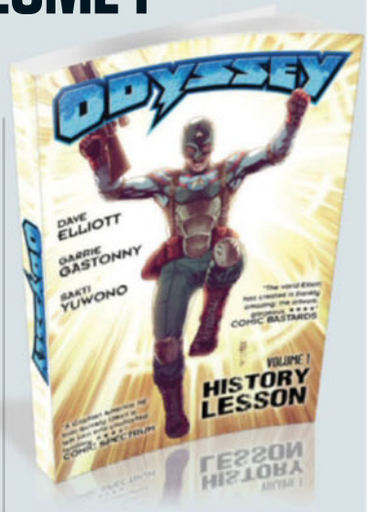




Details **Writer:** Dave Elliot **Artist:** Garry Gastonny **Publisher:** Titan Comics
Price: £11.11 **Released:** Out now

ODYSSEY: VOLUME 1

Star-spanned sham



There's no particular drought of ersatz Captain Americas attempting to tell us something something-mumble-mumble-American foreign policy. *Odyssey*, barring a few tweaks on the myth, is pretty much just that.

The USP for this champion of the USA is that instead of a serum, he has the supernatural, whispers of which make themselves heard throughout the story, chipping away at Blazing Glory's iron-clad sense of certainty in this troubled world. There's all too little of it though, and for the most it skips around safely in the well-trodden space between Ed Brubaker's *Captain America* and Kurt Busiek's *Astro City*.

Garrie Gastonny (*Lady Death*, *Supergod*)'s clean lines would make him a shoo-in for a Marvel book, which is just as well, as *Odyssey: Vol 1 – History Lesson* has far more value as an audition piece.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Details **Writers:** Various **Artists:** Various **Publisher:** Rebellion **Price:** £9.99
Released: Out now

JUDGE DREDD: THE COMPLETE CASE FILES 23

Dredd reckoning

One of the more interesting periods in The Chin's history, *Case Files 23* collects the *2000 AD* and *Megazine* strips published around the 1995 *Judge Dredd* movie.

Among the usual fare (Garth Ennis's dirty post-apocalyptic Western 'Goodnight Kiss' is a highlight, as is 'The Pit' setup 'Bad Friendz'), there's two blatant sops to incoming movie fans, one deft and one daft.

Pat Mills and Paul Johnson's retelling of 'The Return Of Rico' shows the true fate of the movie's gurning villain ("LAAAAURGH!"), ticking the box without sacrificing the established continuity, while John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra's 'Awakening Of Angels' features the truly contrived resurrection of Pa and Junior Angel by fire-worshipping pinheads.

This was referenced once and then never again, and rightly so.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★☆☆



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Details **Author:** Si Spurrier **Artist:** German Erramouspe **Publisher:** Avatar/Titan **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

DISENCHANTED: VOLUME 1

SciFiNow Must read now!

Away with the fairies



To stride into the same territory occupied by such towering monuments to the post-modern fairy tale as Bill Willingham's *Fables*, Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, Bronwyn Carlton and John Ney Rieber's *The Books Of Faerie*, and Alan Moore and Melinda Grebbie's *Lost Girls* requires – more than 'guts' or 'style' or any of those other poorly quantifiable things – a bloody good idea.

Si Spurrier, one of the quiet revolutionaries of British comics thanks to his work on *X-Men: Legacy*, *X-Force* and *Judge Dredd*, has a great idea. Set in a squalid shanty-town in a forgotten Underground station (think *Neverwhere* meets *The Borrowers*), *Disenchanted* follows a family of fey – once the prancing flower fairies of Victorian storybooks – as their lives take a turn for the melodramatic.

It's a darkly comic soap opera with little butterfly wings, and has the flawed soap opera cast to suit. There's the grandmother, an elder dedicated to preserving the traditions; the daughter, a cop having an affair with her goblin superior; the son, an angry, debt-wracked single parent whose true calling may be violence; and the two grandsons, one infatuated with a street gang. On their own, *Disenchanted* would be fun enough, but it's the wider world of the strip and their relationship to it that really gives them weight, setting their worries and dilemmas in your frontal lobe like silly putty.

Framed around grandmother Tabitha giving speeches to the younglings, there's something of the immigrant experience to the central cast. Members of a once proud culture who have left their traditional homeland in favour of a grubby metropolis founded by goblins, who dominate both the legal and illegal structures of Vermintown, it's specific enough to resonate strongly, but broad enough to resonate with everyone who has grown up with tales of a world they've left behind – supposedly better than this one, but full of funny dances and daft old stories. No wonder sex, drugs and gangs seem more interesting.



The level of detail that's gone into this complex ecosystem is fascinating. Revealed naturally, there's a helpful postscript that offers up more background reading, but so much is merely alluded to that seeing the world develop becomes as big a driver for the reader as following the Leveret clan through their trials and tribulations.

The goblins get their power from their possessions; the higher their status and the greater their wealth, the stronger, taller and more handsome they become. Boggarts are empowered by fear – and everyone fears boggarts – while leprechauns have stories, pixies have flowers and fey have dances.

It's an Avatar book, so it's obviously rammed with nudity, but German Erramouspe relishes the disgusting as well as the titillating. World-building is paramount, and that's more than the sum of its characters and their sexcapades. This is a world that fascinates more that it arouses, like turning over a rock and finding a whole city of creepy crawlies.

James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★☆

"A DARKLY COMIC SOAP OPERA WITH LITTLE BUTTERFLY WINGS"



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Tale Of One Bad Rat
Bryan Talbot
Talbot's bleak tale of a teen runaway has a similar mix of storybook style and dark tone.

60 SECONDS WITH JOSHUA HALE FIALKOV



***The Devilers* is about the age-old fight between good and evil – as is *The Life After*. Both have some of the conceptual flavour of your *I, Vampire* run. What sparked the idea behind this series?**

I wanted to do something in the same vein as *I, Vampire*, and Dynamite had this idea kicking around. I saw it as a chance to make sort of a *Dirty Dozen* of exorcists: big and bouncy and fun, which you don't often see in stories like this. Finding ways to merge the horror with adventure and a lighter tone, while still being achingly dark, is something I'm always striving for.

As for *The Life After*, that's a story I've wanted to tell for a while. There's bits of it in that weird issue of *I, Vampire* with Van Helsing talking to Andrew's Professor sidekick. It's about how we judge people to be good, evil, sinful or saintly based on some arbitrary rules that keep changing. So in *The Life After*, you have a guy who finds himself living in the afterlife for suicides, and he sees how unfair it is that all these people in pain and agony are condemned for eternity because of their pain. All of that heavy stuff is wrapped up in a funny adventure story, though, as he looks for the woman he loves with the help of Ernest Hemingway, while being hunted by the middle-management of the afterlife.

Something apparent in all your comics is the sheer diversity of the casts. Is this important to you as a writer?

It is. I want people to read my comics and see themselves, their world and their friends in them. Our world is a multicultural world. Our culture is now a melting pot in a way it never has been before. Taking a wide swatch of the world to represent that is important to me. Plus, race and sex are huge issues right now. We're constantly dealing with how our lives rub up against the prejudices and preconceived notions we have of whoever we call 'other', and to not write about that is, well, foolish. To not embrace it, I think, is the kiss of death.

With *The Life After*, *The Bunker*, *The Devilers* and *Ultimate FF* doing well, how do you juggle these projects?

Don't forget *PUNKS*, coming in October from Image! It's really hard work, but I love it. I'm living my dream every day. Sometimes that dream has the outward appearance of a nightmare, but at it's heart... I'm doing something that I never would have imagined possible: I make a living writing about things I love and care about. Whether it's two hours a day or 24 hours a day, it's all worth it.



The Devilers and *The Life After* are available now from Comixology.

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> WITH BITTEN, MY INSPIRATION WAS ANNE RICE – I WANTED TO WRITE STORIES FROM THE WEREWOLVES' POINT OF VIEW
> KELLEY ARMSTRONG

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Good Omens

WHEN IT COMES TO SUPERNATURAL FANTASY, KELLEY ARMSTRONG IS A PIONEER OF THE MODERN AGE, INTRODUCING A STRONG AND RELATABLE HEROINE IN THE FORM OF ELENA MICHAELS. OLIVIA JONES CONTINUES THAT TREND IN THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CAINSVILLE TRILOGY. WE SPOKE TO THE AUTHOR TO FIND OUT MORE...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

In 1999, Kelley Armstrong wrote her first book, *Bitten*, in the process marking the start of a massive series about the world's only female werewolf. 15 years later, and she's toyed with legions of creatures from the supernatural world. Ghosts, vampires, witches, demons, necromancers – she's done them all.

Last year, she tried something new with *Omens*, the first in the *Cainsville* series. It told the story of Olivia Jones, who discovered that not only was she adopted, but her birth-parents were serial killers, her journey triggering precognitive powers that had remained dormant since childhood...

How did you come up with the character of Olivia?

I love *Cinderella* stories where somebody goes from the bottom and climbs their way up, but I thought it would be fun to do the opposite: somebody who starts off with everything, loses it, and then for me what would be interesting is not if they climbed back up to where they were, but if they discovered that where they were isn't where they want to be, and instead take a different path from there. So that was my original idea for Olivia, and then of course I had to come up with what happens to shake up her world and take her down. I think the most common one for that would be financial ruin. Then I wanted to do something, again, a little more interesting and it became, "OK, what if you found out your real parents were convicted serial killers?" That's definitely going to take you out of whatever perfect life you had.

Did Olivia have a set route, or did her story evolve as you wrote it?

I always have a basic idea, so I knew what her back story was, what her parents' back story was and the general direction that would head. But of course, as I start writing a character I see more and more possibilities, so it becomes a somewhat richer story, as I can add in more and more and give her a little more complex story arc.

Do your characters ever end up surprising you?

Oh definitely! I think that is the great fun of writing. I am someone who writes from a very basic outline, and as I am writing I'm constantly saying, "Oh wait, I know it says on my outline that this happens next, but *this* would be a much more interesting idea."

You seem to be drawn to heroines with both supernatural powers and complicated pasts.

I am – I find them easy to work with. I knew I wanted to give Olivia some kind of supernatural power, but not the typical ones that I have done before: werewolf, vampire, witch. I wanted something I hadn't seen, so I started exploring an aspect that I liked, which is omens and superstitions. It's not the most useful power ever, so it's something I can give to her that will make her life easier, but then make it tougher. The complex back story definitely helps with all that – it just gives me more to work with; more conflict.

You are a pioneer of the early Noughties dark-fantasy explosion. Was there a gap in the market for books that readers wanted, but weren't getting?

I think there must have been. When I wrote *Bitten*, my inspiration was Anne Rice. I had loved her vampire books, and just thought that I would love to do something similar with werewolves, to write stories from the werewolves' point of view. And you had Laurell K Hamilton, who was already writing things similar to that, with supernatural characters in our world. Then Jim Butcher and Charlaine Harris started around the same time I did, so you had these writers working separately on similar things. They just seemed to tap into something that readers were looking for, whether it was the fantastical element, the supernatural, the strong female characters or some combination of that. It was really rather surprising when that took off.

The supernatural has shifted to the mainstream. Has there been a change in perception?

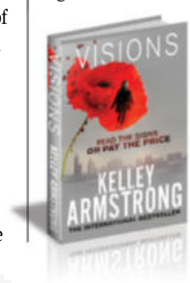
There definitely has. When I was first writing *Bitten*, I called it the dreaded 'W' word, because as soon as I said "werewolf" you could just see people back off. They were like, "No, I don't read those kinds of books," when what they meant was they don't read horror or whatever it was they thought the book was. Today, so many TV shows have elements of the supernatural. It could be werewolves and vampires, but it could just be some odd element. You get something like *Heroes* or *Lost*, and all of those shows that just have some fantastical element, and they really become mainstream shows.

Have you been watching the *Bitten* TV series?

I haven't. I haven't been involved with it. It is being handled by professionals [laughs]. That is the best way to leave it. I wrote *Bitten* 15 years ago, so I have moved away from that. I would not be the best person at all to be involved, so I've been letting them do it, and they seem to be doing a great job.

Is it weird thinking back to writing *Bitten* 15 years ago?

It is definitely weird; I can still remember parts of it. This part here or this part here, or editing parts or working on parts. It does not seem like 15 years ago. I was at a convention recently doing a workshop about writing a fight scene, and the moderator said, "In *Bitten*, there's this fight scene where Elena is doing this," and I couldn't remember that fight scene occurring or tell you any details about it, which proved that yes, my memory is not nearly as good as I hope it is.



Visions by Kelley Armstrong is out now from Orbit.

Heroines from other worlds

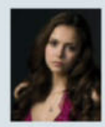
HOW DOES ELENA RANK AGAINST OTHER SUPERNATURAL HEROINES?



ELENA MICHAELS
The Women Of The Otherworld
Created by: Kelley Armstrong
Played by: Laura Vandervoort
Profile: The world's only female werewolf. Pack Alpha and mother of two.
Love interest(s): Clayton Danvers
Bad-ass rating: 9



SOOKIE STACKHOUSE
The Southern Vampire Mysteries
Created by: Charlaine Harris
Played by: Anna Paquin
Profile: Human telepath with fairy ancestry. Sassy waitress whose life is constantly in danger.
Love interest(s): Bill Compton/Sam Merlotte/Eric Northman/Alcide Herveaux/Ben Flynn
Bad-ass rating: 6



ELENA GILBERT
The Vampire Diaries
Created by: LJ Smith
Played by: Nina Dobrev
Profile: Human (Season One), Petrova Doppelganger (Season Two-Three) and vampire (Season Four-Five). Likes Salvatores.
Love interest(s): Stefan Salvatore/Damon Salvatore
Bad-ass rating: 8



BELLA SWAN
Twilight
Created by: Stephenie Meyer
Played by: Kristen Stewart
Profile: Human-turned-vampire who hates everything but Edward Cullen. Pale and interesting.
Love interest(s): Edward Cullen/Jacob Black
Bad-ass rating: 2 (for the most brutal birth scene ever)

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Studio Ghibli Peter C… …la Lost

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FLASHBACK
THE DOCTOR WHO WASN'T
THE UNTOLD STORY OF PETER CUSHING'S THIRD DR WHO MOVIE **118**

QUIZ
POLAR BEARS
WILL YOU BE LOST'S GUARDIAN OF THE ISLAND? **126**

COMPLETE GUIDE
STUDIO GHIBLI
HOW STUDIO GHIBLI BEAT DISNEY AT ITS OWN GAME **110**

RETRO CLASSIC
BARBARELLA
WHY JANE FONDA'S FOLLY IS THE SEXIEST SCI-FI FILM OF THE SIXTIES **122**

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AN IMAGINE MONTHLY

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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO STUDIO GHIBLI

WITH THE RETIREMENT OF HAYAO MIYAZAKI, ONE OF THE GIANTS OF ANIMATION HAS LEFT THE STAGE. JOIN US AS WE LOOK BACK AT THE STUDIO HE HELPED CREATE, WHICH GAVE US SUCH BELOVED FILMS AS MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO, SPIRITED AWAY AND PRINCESS MONONOKE. WE PAY TRIBUTE TO STUDIO GHIBLI…

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

A young girl and her sleeping sister wait for their father at the bus stop as the rain falls. Suddenly, standing next to them is a large, grey, furry forest spirit. As water drips onto its nose, we understand that he too is waiting for the bus. The girl reaches into her coat and hands her new companion an umbrella, and Totoro takes it. This scene is just one of the many iconic Studio Ghibli moments that has a place in the hearts of film lovers everywhere.

While at last year's Venice Film Festival for the premiere of *The Wind Rises*, writer, director and master of animation Hayao Miyazaki announced his retirement. What would this mean for Studio Ghibli? Would the animation studio that had inspired and entertained so many be shut down?

"We're taking what we're calling a breather, a hiatus, while we stop and reconsider what we're going to do in the future," Ghibli producer Geoffrey Wexler tells us. "I think it affects the studio dramatically. I think it would be wrong to say otherwise."

So for the time being, Ghibli will temporarily close its doors, but it's important to note that it's far from a one-man operation. It was founded in 1985 by Miyazaki, fellow animator Isao Takahata, producer Toshio Suzuki and animation studio head Yasuyoshi Tokuma, but it's impossible to underestimate the impact that the director has had on the company and the art of animation.

Over the course of its near 30-year existence, the brand has truly earned the loyalty of its fans, with the Ghibli title card coming to represent one of the closest things cinemagoers get to a guarantee. Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc, authors of *Studio Ghibli: The Films Of Hayao Miyazaki And Isao Takahata*, believe that the secret to their lasting appeal is relatively simple. "Ghibli's films are wonderfully inventive, soaring flights of imagination that invoke a sense of wonder for the viewer and manage to appeal to all age groups. Their themes are universal, the films are beautifully crafted and the stories speak volumes about the world we live in, even when their worlds are fantastical."

When it comes to the studio itself, Wexler tells us that there is a real sense of community and commitment to the craft. "I'm very aware of the ethos of protecting a filmmaker's film," he explains. "I think that ethos is very clear across the whole studio – it's respect for the filmmakers and respect for the films that they make. It's very close-knit, down to earth, egalitarian. People wash their own dishes, and we cook for each other, and it's a real community, with very talented people who are extremely proud of and very enthusiastic for the brand and the films, and we protect them with great diligence and great pride."

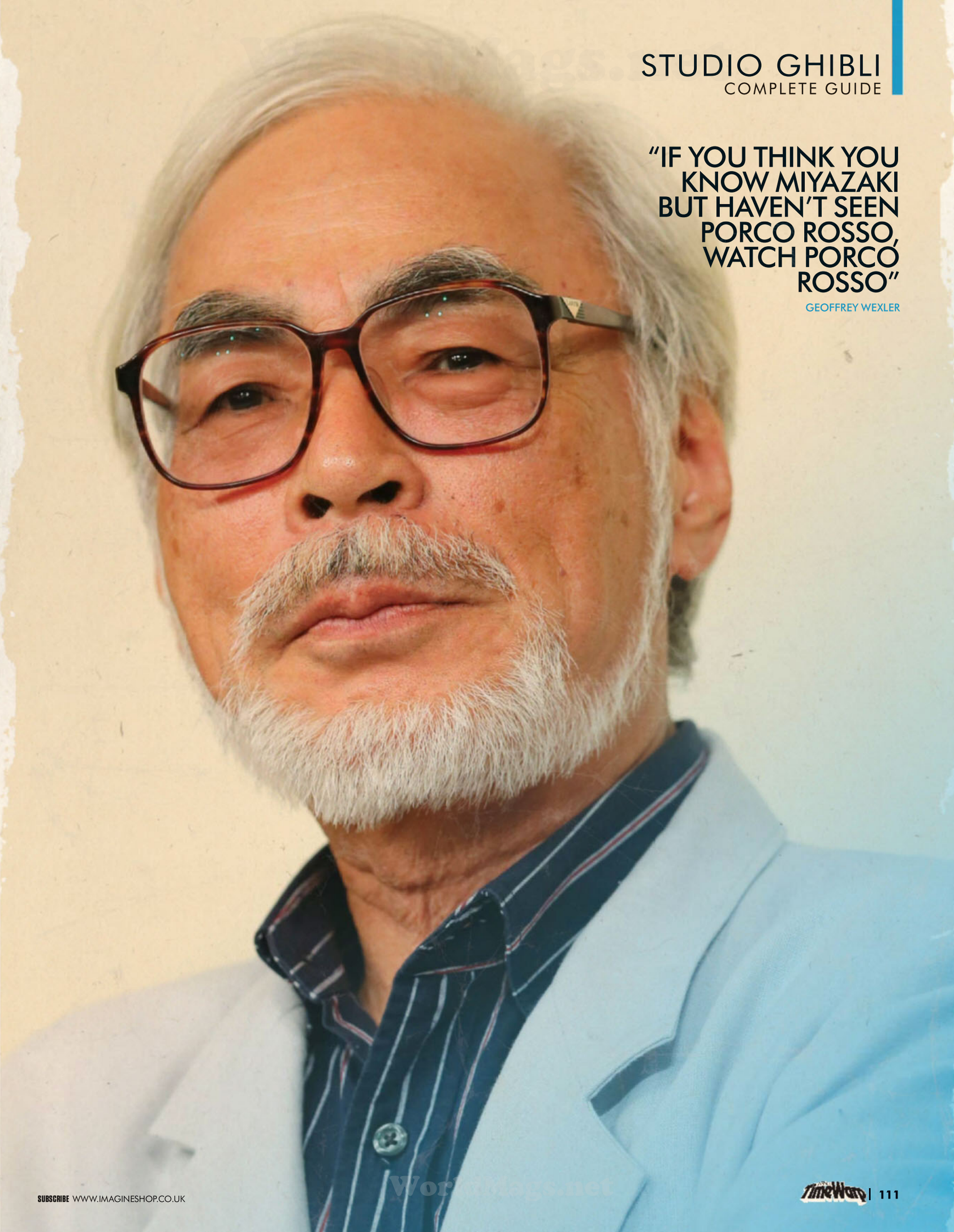


Thanks to films like *Spirited Away*, Studio Ghibli's impact will always be felt.

It was this integrity and commitment to the craft that led to the studio's formation. By the Eighties, Miyazaki was a respected animator with his first film under his belt: *The Castle Of Cagliostro*. Following that success, Miyazaki had the opportunity to adapt his manga, *Nausicaä Of The Valley Of The Wind*, into a film. Set in a post-apocalyptic Earth, it tells the story of a princess who finds herself in the middle of a war between the toxic forest and the human settlers, and relied heavily on the involvement of Suzuki and Takahata. "Suzuki's role in the formation of Studio Ghibli cannot be underestimated; he played a pivotal role in getting *Nausicaä* produced as an animation, and was instrumental in the subsequent development of the studio." Odell and Le Blanc tell us. "Takahata's first feature film as director was *Horus: Prince Of The Sun*, for which Miyazaki provided creative input."

Released in 1984, the film's success and the collaboration of the three men led to the decision being made to create their own company. "Takahata had been Miyazaki's friend since the younger man joined

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"IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW MIYAZAKI BUT HAVEN'T SEEN PORCO ROSSO, WATCH PORCO ROSSO"

GEOFFREY WEXLER

[animation studio] Toei Doga, so by the time Miyazaki made *Nausicaä* they had been friends for over 20 years," explains Helen McCarthy, author of *Hayao Miyazaki: Master Of Japanese Animation*. "[He is] often the forgotten partner when Western fans and journalists discuss Ghibli. Both had the opinion that, to make films of the quality they wanted to make, they needed a fixed staff rather than relying on finding contract workers afresh for each production."

The studio would see the trio enjoy total autonomy, but striking out on their own was a gamble, especially as they needed help from investors who would demand a return. "At that stage, Ghibli had no real merchandising arm, so the support of backers and sponsors was crucial," McCarthy tells us. "If they had lost money heavily, backing for future productions would have been hard to find, and their intention to employ animators permanently and train them to their own standards might not have been sustainable."



Miyazaki and co announced their arrival with *Laputa: Castle In The Sky*.

"PIXAR'S JOHN LASSETER HAS SAID THAT WHEN HIS TEAM HAVE ANY KIND OF WRITERS BLOCK OR ARTISTS BLOCK, HE HAS THEM WATCH MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO"

GEOFFREY WEXLER

However, while they were taking a risk, Miyazaki, Suzuki and Takahata had confidence in what they were making. There could be no half measures with their debut film, and the result was 1986's *Laputa: Castle In The Sky*. "True to the studio's ideals of making the very best animation using the resources they had, Miyazaki launched into the production with gusto," explain Odell and Le Blanc. "The subject matter was safe – a ripping adventure story with action, comedy, pirates, big robots and a sweet, burgeoning love story. The studio didn't compromise on production values, and the quality of the film is exemplary."

The next two projects for Studio Ghibli would truly set the tone for the studio: 1988's *My Neighbour Totoro*, directed by Miyazaki, and *Grave Of The*



Much of Ghibli's output focuses on the otherworldly adventures of young heroes and heroines.



***My Neighbour Totoro* is perhaps the studio's greatest achievement.**

ALL THE FEELS

Seven moments where Ghibli reached out and touched us



BOAR ATTACK
PRINCESS MONONOKE (1997)

Princess Mononoke starts as it means to go on, confronting the viewer with a rampaging boar god and showing us the effect this violent conflict has on both humans and forest creatures.



KIKI LOSES HER POWERS
KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE (1989)

After excelling with her delivery service, Kiki's powers start to fail her. Heartbreakingly, she can no longer hear Jiji's voice, leaving her truly alone.



FATHER AND DAUGHTER FIGHT
PONYO (2008)

Ponyo's decision to become human is contested by her father, and the film beautifully conveys the battle between independence and paternal love.



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Fireflies, directed by Takahata. The latter, an adaptation of Akiyuki Nosaka's book, remains one of the most emotionally affecting animated films ever made. Set against the backdrop of the end of World War II, it's incredibly moving, and sees the studio at its most essentially human. The gentle *My Neighbour Totoro* was something very different entirely.

"The double billing of *My Neighbour Totoro* and *Grave Of The Fireflies* appears – on the surface – to be one of the most perplexing ever," explain Odell and Le Blanc. "They were released as a double bill more from necessity than design. Takahata had managed to obtain funding for *Grave Of The Fireflies*, but Miyazaki was having trouble sourcing cash for his 'personal film', which was perceived to be too childish and didn't appear to have a clearly defined audience. A deal was struck whereby both films could be financed and would be released together, resulting in the most emotionally devastating three hours of all time!"

The girls' discovery of the spirits of the forest runs parallel to the progress of their mother's health, and the languid pace and seeing the world through the eyes of these young characters makes the film so special; the sense that incredible things exist just a little way beyond the trees. From Totoro himself to the incredible Catbus, Miyazaki never presents these strange creatures as a threat; simply something unknown.

"*Totoro* is my favourite movie of all time and, in my opinion the greatest film ever made," says McCarthy. "[Pixar chief] John Lasseter is famous for saying that when his team have any kind of writers block or artists block, he has them watch *Totoro*, so that's pretty high praise," adds Wexler.



What followed was a string of financial successes for the studio, including the adorable *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), the environmentally conscious raccoon fable *Pom Poko* (1994) and the excellent *Porco Rosso* (1992), about an ace pilot chasing sky pirates. Each of these films represented a success for the studio, both in terms of box-office revenue and the growth of the brand.

"*Porco Rosso* is delightful," enthuses Wexler. "Especially to men who may think animation is for kids, or they may think Studio Ghibli animation is for girls, because girls are the heroes or whatever, *Porco Rosso* is an absolute delight, I never tire of it. I watch these films for work, and that one I'll put on for fun. If you think you know Miyazaki-san but you haven't seen *Porco Rosso*, watch *Porco Rosso*."

There was tragedy to be found in these years, however. 1995's *Whisper Of The Heart*, written by Miyazaki, was the first film to be directed by animator Yoshifumi Kondo. It was a tremendous success, but the strain of its production would prove too much for its director. Kondo would die of a brain aneurysm that has since been attributed to work-induced stress. It is believed that this shock led to Miyazaki announcing his retirement in 1998 after the release of one of his greatest achievements: *Princess Mononoke*.



***Kiki's Delivery Service* was another financial success.**

The daredevil Porco Rosso is one of the studio's more unconventional heroes.



PIG PARENTS
SPIRITED AWAY (2001)
The very beginning of *Spirited Away* packs quite an emotional punch, as Chihiro runs back to look for her parents, only to find in their place two pigs gorging themselves on a huge pile of food.



CAN HOWL RETURN?
HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE (2004)
Howl spends his night in bird form, but the longer he stays like that, the harder it is to change back. It's brutal watching Sophie wait for his return.



THE SEARCH FOR MEI
MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO (1988)
When Satsuki's little sister Mei runs away, she turns to Totoro for help, but not before a gut-wrenching moment when a shoe is found in the river. Is it Mei's?



THE TRAIN JOURNEY
SPIRITED AWAY (2001)
The final train journey is an excellent example of Miyazaki's skill for finding emotional weight in moments of contemplation, as Chihiro sits with No-Face and thinks about her past and future.



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WORLDS OF WONDER
The 10 best Studio Ghibli creatures



1. TOTORO
MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO (1988)
The giant, friendly furry title character is somehow both unknowable and definitively benevolent. From the moment we find him taking a snooze to helping Satsuki find Mei, it's hard to put into words just how brilliant he is.



2. NO FACE
SPIRITED AWAY (2001)
The mysterious character hovering around the fringes of the first half of *Spirited Away* becomes one of the second half's greatest threats. Bloated, revolting and driven by his greed, No Face requires Sen's intervention to find himself again.



3. NAGO
PRINCESS MONONOKE (1997)
Miyazaki's film gets off to a hell of a start as this rampaging boar god charges into Ashitaka's camp. The dark forces possessing him cover him in leech-like creatures, and it takes a hell of a lot to put him down and out of his misery.



4. PONYO
PONYO (2008)
No list would be complete without the adorable lead of this riff on Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid*. Charming, determined and utterly winning, it's Ponyo herself that makes the film so moving.



5. THE MOVING CASTLE
HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE (2004)
So it's not an actual creature, but we'd argue that Miyazaki's design gives Howl's home just as much personality as any character in the film. Watching the castle emerge from the fog at the film's opening, it's clear who the film's real star is.



6. PORCO ROSSO
PORCO ROSSO (1992)
The porcine star of one of Miyazaki's most underrated films makes a sharp change from his young heroines. The World War I veteran turned sky pirate hunter is principled, bold and totally heroic, and also a man-pig.



7. THE CATBUS
MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO (1988)
Only this far down the list because Totoro was top, the Catbus is one of Miyazaki's most perplexing creations, but also one of the most brilliant. With many paws, eyes for headlights and an unerring grin, what's not to like?



8. THE KODAMA
PRINCESS MONONOKE (1997)
These gentle forest spirits provide the heart to the film that presents both sides of a violent conflict. They're both incredibly striking and somehow quite affecting, despite never saying a word.



9. OHMU
NAUSICAA (1984)
Not technically a Ghibli film, but we had to include the Ohmu. While some of Miyazaki's creations are brilliant because they are unidentifiable, there's no mistaking the inspiration for these creatures.



10. JIJI
KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE (1989)
The sassy cat provides the smart mouth for the big-hearted *Kiki's Delivery Service*, as the young witch sets out to make her own way in the world. He's sensible and cautious, but always has Kiki's best interests at heart.

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Princess Mononoke was a watershed moment for the studio in terms of reaching a Western audience. Miyazaki's film, about forest gods at war with human villagers who want the forest and its resources for themselves, struck a chord with the West. It's not hard to see why – *Princess Mononoke* is a classic fairy tale that makes no concessions for its younger audience. Packed with bewitching creatures and boasting a strong female lead, it's very dark in places, morally complex – loaded with Machiavellian scheming – and really quite scary.

"*Princess Mononoke* was very different to the more family oriented fare," Odell and Le Blanc tell us. "It was an expensive production, and Miyazaki's commitment to the project was such that he personally checked around 80,000 animation cells for quality. It's a film that asks questions about the environment, as well as rounded and complex characterisation. It was more likely to be appreciated by an older audience, something that resulted in a PG-13 rating in the USA, because it contained a greater degree of violence than would normally be expected in a fantasy animation (in Western countries at the time)."

It was the first film to be released following the studio's distribution deal with Disney, which McCarthy describes as "a deal made on their terms and widely considered a coup within the industry – and the income that let them re-equip with the latest computer workstations, only to return to hand-drawn animation a decade later." However, it would be distributed in the US by Miramax, leading Ghibli into partnership with Harvey Weinstein. His suggestions for trimming the film led to one of the best-remembered moments in the studio's history, as an authentic katana was sent to the Miramax office from Toshio Suzuki with a message reading 'No cuts'. On the plus side, the voice cast was excellent, and Neil Gaiman worked on the translation.

With Miyazaki now in ostensible retirement, Takahata returned to the director's chair for 1999's *My Neighbours The Yamadas*. It was a marked departure both in terms of the style of animation and story structure, telling the larger story of the family through a series of independent vignettes, and it was the first real box-office disappointment for the studio. While Miyazaki was on hiatus from his directorial duties, he was spending more time with his family, and the time spent with young children would cause him to realise that there was an audience he had never made a film for. 2001's *Spirited Away* sprung from his desire to make a film for those on the verge of adolescence.

The film's heroine is Chihiro, a young girl who reluctantly accompanies her parents on their move to the countryside. Along the way, they wander into what looks like an abandoned fairground. As darkness falls, a young boy orders her to run. Her parents have been turned into pigs, and she watches as the area comes to life and a procession of spirits emerge. She finds herself at an enormous, lavish bathhouse for spirits, and the only way she can survive is to work.

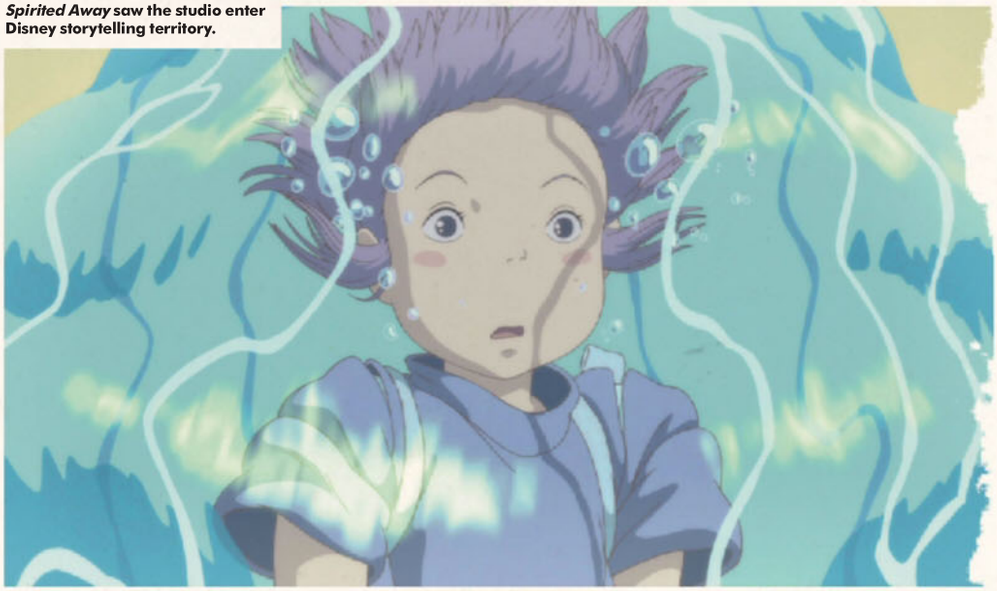
If *My Neighbour Totoro* gave its human characters a peek at the magical world behind the trees, and *Princess Mononoke* saw our world and theirs clash, *Spirited Away* luxuriates in the fantastical and detailed spirit world. Renamed 'Sen' by the witch Yubaba, Chihiro works in the fairy tale equivalent of the Grand Budapest Hotel. It's overwhelming trying to take in each of the marvellous designs as the spirits, endearing, grotesque and utterly unreadable, make their way through the bathhouse. This is a fully realised world that we have found ourselves in.

In classic fairy tale tradition, it's also the story of a young girl overcoming a series of obstacles to find her way home, which Odell and Le Blanc believe contributed to its success. "*Spirited Away* was suitable for family audiences and more compatible with Western expectations of animated film," they explain. "What *Spirited Away* managed to achieve was a blend of the familiar with the extraordinary. For many Western audiences, it was their first glimpse into Miyazaki's wonderful imagination."

"It was the closest Miyazaki had come to a Disney or Hollywood-type cartoon," adds McCarthy. "Those play very well with children and families. You have to remember that Disney movies are very, very successful in Japan, and making a Disney-eque film very well is a good way to guarantee an audience."

Its success didn't stop at the box office. *Spirited Away* won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2002, and the global awareness of Studio Ghibli had never been higher. While it added to the studio's prestige, McCarthy stresses that the Oscar win didn't influence the behaviour of the three heads. "Neither Miyazaki nor Takahata care about awards – they've both made that clear," she explains. "If Ghibli never won another Western award, they are such a strong brand in their own territory that it wouldn't matter."

The first film following *Spirited Away* was 2002's *The Cat Returns*, directed by Hiroyuki Morita. It's the story of a shy girl who finds herself taken to the cat kingdom after saving the life of their prince, and it was a great success. Miyazaki's attention, meanwhile, was focused elsewhere. He was hard at work adapting Diana Wynne-Jones' beloved novel *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). This loose adaptation finds Sophie, a shy young



***Spirited Away* saw the studio enter Disney storytelling territory.**

"WHAT SPIRITED AWAY MANAGED TO ACHIEVE WAS A BLEND OF THE FAMILIAR WITH THE EXTRAORDINARY"

COLIN ODELL AND MICHELLE LE BLANC



It's a rare Ghibli film that doesn't have an oddball creation or two.



***Howl's Moving Castle* garnered the studio with even more acclaim.**

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hat-maker, transformed into an old woman by the wicked witch of the Wastes. She joins magician Howl, his friend Markl and fire spirit Calcifer as a violent conflict rages through the land. It's wonderfully moving and fantastically rendered, and works as a companion piece to *Princess Mononoke*, as the thoughtless and endless conflict threatens to destroy Howl completely.

Miyazaki's busy schedule with *Howl's* would mean that *Tales From Earthsea* (2006), based on the beloved story by Ursula K Le Guin, would be handed over to his son Goro. Sadly, the film would be seen as that rare thing: a Ghibli failure. Le Guin was largely disappointed with the end result, calling it "incoherent" and saying that it misrepresented the book. "I dislike *Earthsea* – I see it as a betrayal of the original text and of Ghibli's principles," McCarthy tells us.

Miyazaki Senior would return in 2008 with *Ponyo*, which the director was determined to be entirely hand-drawn. The story, inspired by *The Little Mermaid*, tells the story of a small fish-girl named Brunhilde, who finds a human boy and becomes torn between two worlds. In some ways, *Ponyo* feels like a reversal of *Spirited Away*, as our plucky young lead is thrown into a human world that's completely alien to her, but that she falls in love with. It's incredibly warm-hearted and truly affecting, and saw the studio back on course.

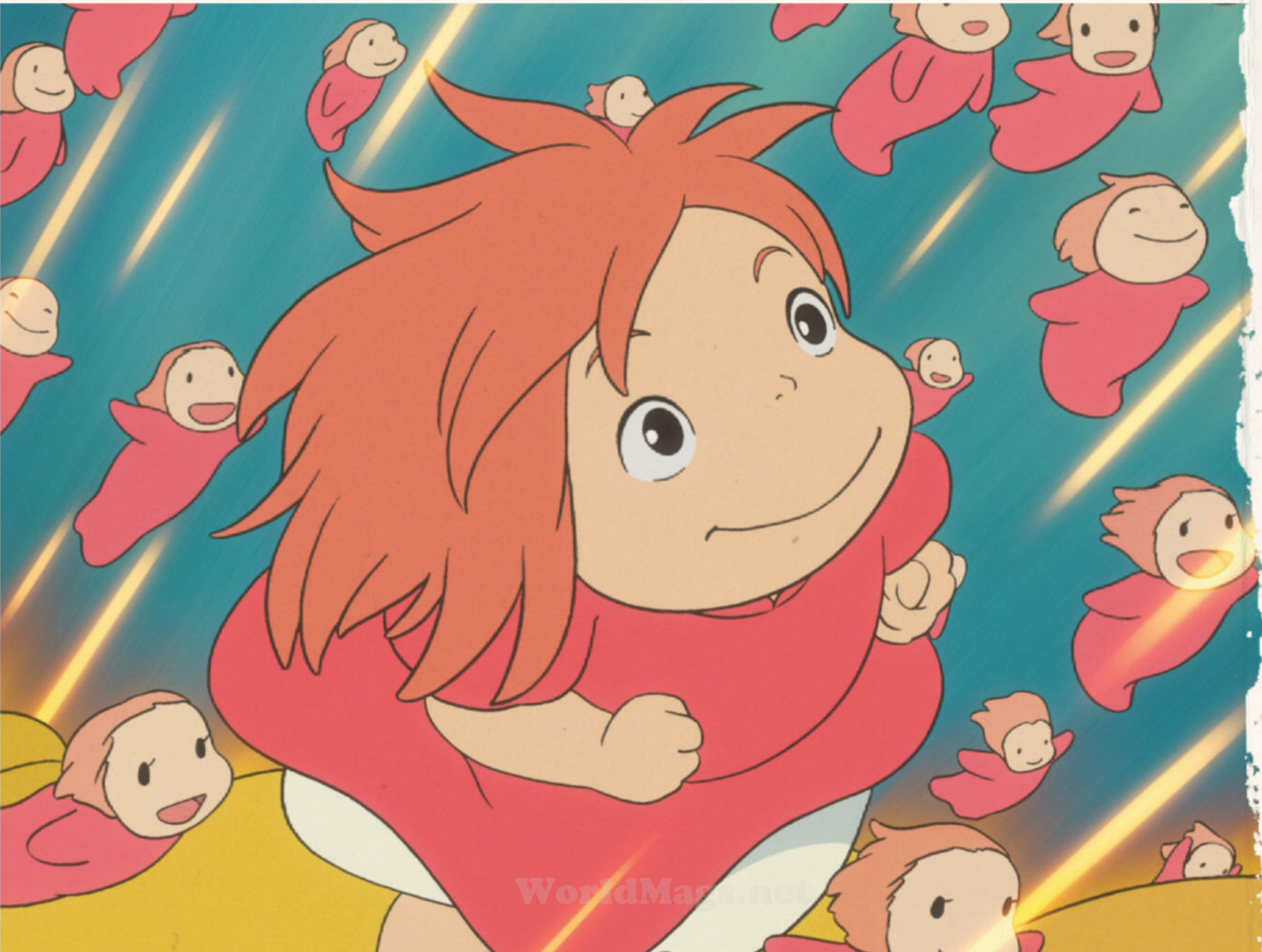
Following *Ponyo*, first-time director Hiromasa Yonebayashi delivered *Arrietty*, a charming take on Mary Norton's *The Borrowers*. It was another success, proving to be the highest-grossing film in Japan for 2010. It was followed by 2011's *From Up On Poppy Hill*, Goro Miyazaki's return to the director's chair, which proved far more successful than his previous turn.

This brings us to *The Wind Rises*, the fictionalised biography of fighter-plane designer Jiro Horikoshi. It's absolutely beautiful, as the young engineer channels his fascination with flight into his machines. It combines so many classic Miyazaki elements, from the exhilarating freedom of the air to the pointless brutality of war and a heartbreaking love story. We can't help but wonder if it was designed to be his goodbye.

"I get asked that a lot," Wexler tells us. "I think it was kind of never and always the case for this film.



***Arrietty* is one of the studio's more recent productions.**



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Some see *The Wind Rises* as Miyazaki's farewell film.

"THE FILMS ARE BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED AND THE STORIES SPEAK VOLUMES ABOUT THE WORLD WE LIVE IN, EVEN WHEN THEIR WORLDS ARE FANTASTICAL"

COLIN ODELL AND MICHELLE LE BLANC

He's not only the director. You ask him what he does, he's an animator. It's painstakingly hard work, and he really suffers through all the details and working with his team. So it may not have been this one, it probably could have been within a few more films, but that would have put him in his 90s, right? So I wasn't surprised, but I didn't know it was coming."

"His way of making films, thinking about the story and checking the animation drawn by the different animators and overseeing the sound. He's in charge of it all," explains Toshio Suzuki. "He hasn't changed his way of working at all, but physically he's reached a limit. If he'd changed his way of working, for example, by only writing the storyboard, he could have gone on making films. But he thinks that if he isn't able to control those three things, he can't be called a director. So I think he decided he'd reached his limit."

We've yet to see *When Marnie Was There*, the most recent Ghibli film, and Wexler notes that it comes from emerging directing and producing talents at the studio, but he tells us that the decision really does rest with the studio heads. "It's their company, it's their studio, and we'll see what happens after this."

While we wait and see what Ghibli will do, there has never been a better time to revisit their wonderful work. What is certain is that we'll be seeing the influence and impact of their work for a long time.

"Just before the Academy Awards ceremony, there was an animation-focused event, and there was the director and producer of each film that was nominated," Wexler remembers. "Unfortunately, Miyazaki couldn't make it, but Suzuki was there. One of the questions to the directors and producers was, 'What was the film that really made you want to become an animation director and producer?' First of all it was *The Jungle Book*, and then it was *Totoro*, *Totoro*, *Totoro*, *Mononoke*, all Ghibli films, all the way across from all different directors and producers, young and old. And Suzuki-san I think was very surprised. I think he was very happy to hear that our films give people such joy."

The Wind Rises is out now on Blu-ray and DVD from Studiocanal. Helen McCarthy is the author of *Hayao Miyazaki: Master Of Japanese Animation*. Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc are the authors of *Studio Ghibli: The Films Of Hayao Miyazaki And Isao Takahata*.

GIVE US YOUR VOICE

Why the English-language versions of Studio Ghibli films are second to none

Purists will always insist that you watch Studio Ghibli films in the original Japanese, but the fact is that the English-language dubs are absolutely superb. With tremendous care to preserve the integrity of the script and the casting of actors rather than stars, the English-language versions of the films lose nothing in translation.

"I'm very happy to hear you say that," laughs Geoffrey Wexler. "We kind of stick fast to the rule of protecting the original film. I hear that term 'stunt casting' a lot – we definitely try to avoid that; we want people who will be classic for a very long time, someone who be around past their most current film. I'm very much keen on very well-trained, well-established actors. It's remarkable, we find actors who know our films and love them, and actors who haven't experienced our films, and the reaction is always a pleasure to see. It's usually mid-way through their first or second day in the studio recording, they kind of stop mid-sentence, slack-jawed and say, 'Oh my god, that is beautiful!' I love that moment, and it's happened with very warm and fuzzy actors, and kind of prickly actors who you don't expect to do that, and so we're very fortunate to be able to attract that level of talent."

The foreign-language dubs are a delicate process, as international distributors are keen to make sure that the films appeal to local audiences. "We feel very strongly about protecting a filmmaker's original intent, the films are made for the Japanese audience in mind, and there's always a tug of war between us and our counterparts between how to make them local and relevant to the country they're being shown in," Wexler explains. "I always believe in the integrity of the original film and being very true to the original film. So we have to say no a lot, but it's a healthy tug of war."

BEST GHIBLI DUBBERS



TINA FEY AS LISA IN PONYO





WERNER HERZOG AS CASTORP IN THE WIND RISES





JEAN SIMMONS AS OLD SOPHIE IN HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE





BILLY BOB THORNTON AS JIKO-BO IN PRINCESS MONONOKE





SAOIRSE RONAN AS ARRIETTY IN ARRIETTY



© Tinay Fey – Mingle Media TV/Werner Herzog – Erinc Salor/Billy Bob Thornton – Kubacheck/Saoirse Ronan – Slobbi/Jean Simmons - Kate Gabrielle

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4,000 miles
to the center of the earth
to a world within our world.







A Max J. Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky Production

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS'

AT THE EARTH'S CORE

A COLUMBIA PICTURES Release

Starring

DOUG McCLURE • PETER CUSHING • CAROLINE MUNRO

Executive Producer HARRY N. BLUM • Screenplay By MILTON SUBOTSKY • Based on the Novel By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Produced By JOHN DARK • Directed By KEVIN CONNOR

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FLASHBACK

AT THE EARTH'S CORE

USING PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED PRODUCTION PAPERWORK FROM THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION, WE EXAMINE THE VIBRANT 1976 PETER CUSHING FANTASY, AT THE EARTH'S CORE, TO DISCOVER A DOCTOR WHO MOVIE IN ALL BUT NAME

WORDS **CHARLES NORTON**

1976 was a good time to make a *Doctor Who* movie. Around 11 million people were watching the series on BBC1, and international sales were just about to take off in the US.

There had been *Doctor Who* films before, of course. Amicus Productions had made two features in the mid-Sixties, in which Dr Who (sic), played by Peter Cushing, saved the world from the villainous Daleks in a garish Technicolor universe of alien jungles and flying saucers. However, that series ended after the release of just two films: *Dr Who And The Daleks* (1965) and *Daleks' Invasion Earth: 2150 AD* (1966).

The Seventies were a far bleaker time for the British film industry. Many small production outfits were now unable to compete with American summer blockbusters, but Amicus survived longer than most. Run by two ambitious Americans, Max J Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky, from a shed in Shepperton, Amicus only ever made films in association with other much larger companies. It lost far less money than its competitors, simply due to the fact that it had less to lose in the first place.

In fact, Amicus made something of an unlikely resurgence. Adventure yarn *The Land That Time Forgot*, directed by Kevin Connor, put the company straight into *Variety*'s top 50 box-office money-makers list, and became the 14th most profitable British movie of 1975, despite stiff competition from Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*.

When he saw the box-office returns, Samuel Z Arkoff, vice president at AIP (American International Pictures) pumped $1 million into Amicus, and asked them for another feature within the year. There was additional backing from British Lion Films too, who had bankrolled Cushing's *Dalek* films ten years earlier.

The script for *The Land That Time Forgot* had been based on a novella by prolific pulpster (and Tarzan creator) Edgar Rice Burroughs, and a Burroughs story would be the basis for Amicus' next screenplay too. Originally published in the pages of *All-Story Weekly* in April 1914, *At The Earth's Core* was the first of Burroughs' Pellucidar books – a series set in a subterranean world, miles beneath the Earth's crust.

Subotsky's screen treatment was heavily restructured on reassuringly family friendly grounds. The story opens in the UK, where an eccentric inventor named Dr Abner Perry (Peter Cushing) has built a machine, in which he hopes to travel to the centre of the Earth.

Interestingly, only twice is the character distinctly identified as such. Mainly, he is referred to simply as 'Doctor'.

The Doctor and his travelling companion David (Doug McClure) discover the strange underground world of Pellucidar, where the pair stumble across a tribe of primitive humans under the thumb of the villainous Mahars – a race of flying telepathic reptiles who rule via mind-control. Naturally, Perry helps overthrow the Mahars and frees the natives. It all sounds oddly similar to *Dr Who And The Daleks* – the first of the Cushing *Dalek* films penned by Subotsky back in 1965. The overtones were certainly not lost on

Some see *At The Earth's Core* as a *Doctor Who* film in all but name.



Cushing, who returned to give a well-mannered retread of his performance as the Doctor. The face was a little thinner, and so was the hair, but it was unmistakably the same Dr Who.

With a first draft completed, it was left to Amicus's John Dark to submit the manuscript to the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) – part of a legal requirement for all films released in UK cinemas. Dark wrote to the BBFC on 9 June 1975 and sent them the script. As with the *Dalek* films of the Sixties, Amicus hoped to have the film released with a 'U' certificate, allowing children to be admitted to screenings. Dark offered a reassurance that, as with *The Land That Time Forgot*, it would be tailored for younger audiences.

BBFC boss Stephen Murphy, following a recent bereavement, was absent during much of the time that *At The Earth's Core* was being considered. As such, most of the vetting on the script was passed to BBFC assistant secretary Ken R Penry, acting director in Murphy's absence.

A memo from Penry to Murphy, dated 30 June 1975, commented that, "I think it unlikely that this film will receive a lower category than 'A' [making the film as an adult movie]. There is a considerable amount of violence, some of the monsters appear quite frightening, and the sequence in which the Mahars eat their victims is fairly strong."

Back at Amicus, there were bigger problems. In summer 1975, Subotsky left the company. With the inevitably acrimonious fallout, plans for *At The Earth's Core* remained on ice until the end of the year. By the time Dark was able to pick the project up again, it had gained a new co-star: McClure, who had already proven to be such an asset in *The Land That Time Forgot*. Shooting was projected to begin on the new film on 5 January 1976. Unlike Cushing's *Dalek* pictures (and almost every Amicus movie since), however, the new film would not be made at the company's preferred base of Shepperton Studios.

"*The Land That Time Forgot* had been the very last film that was done at Shepperton, because they closed the studio," remembers Vic Simpson, construction manager on *At The Earth's Core*. "They sacked all the staff halfway through the film, just prior to Easter of that year, which was '74, and I had to convert over to a freelance situation engaging labour and God knows what to finish the film off. When we did finish it, the studio was up for sale."

Amicus quickly moved to the more prestigious (and expensive) Pinewood Studios in Iver Heath. Despite Pinewood's reputation, the move was a reluctant one. Amicus had called Shepperton its home for many years, and with the departure of Subotsky, the change of studio was another sign that an era was coming to an end.

Just after Christmas, Dark submitted a revised script to the BBFC that he hoped would be more in line with the 'U' category. By this point, Murphy had left the BBFC, and it was his replacement, James Ferman, who received Dark's script on 29 December 1975. Penry, again charged with looking over the script, wrote back to Dark on 8 January: "The comments in our previous letter are still valid. The film appears closer to the 'A' category than the 'U', but the treatment is all-important. The aspects that still worry us are the violence, the frightening appearance of the monsters and the sequence in which the Mahars eat their victims. The revision includes in scene 70 page 24, the direction that Hooja falls to the ground 'spitting blood.' This is unlikely to be acceptable in either the 'U' or 'A' category."

Peter Cushing – who had previously headed up the two *Dr Who* films – took the lead role.





Creating the monstrous dinosaurs was a tricky process.

Co-leading man Doug McClure alongside Caroline Munro.



"PETER CUSHING WAS RELEASED FROM FILMING TO ALLOW HIM TO WORK ON A NEW AMERICAN FILM CALLED STAR WARS"

As with *Dr Who And The Daleks*, *At The Earth's Core* was an entirely studio-bound production, shot completely indoors, even for those few scenes set outside. The movie had only a mid-sized budget – proportionally much smaller than either of Cushing's *Dalek* films, and was made over a period of about six months. Cushing wore an almost identical facsimile of his costume from the *Dr Who* pictures (complete with pale blue cravat to bring out his eyes), further reinforcing the film's claim as a notional sequel.

The world of Pellucidar was realised as a combination of multi-coloured tropical forest and fiery caves – not dissimilar to the landscape seen in *Dr Who And The Daleks*. Carried over from the company's previous Burroughs picture, Vic Simpson and his 60-strong construction crew worked under the auspices of designer Maurice Carter to bring this world to life across four of Pinewood's film stages. "When I had the trees built," explains Simpson, "we had to use one of the big stages as a workshop, because the workshops weren't big enough to assemble them."

Filming wrapped in spring 1976, with Cushing being released early to allow him to work on a new American film called *Star Wars*. George J Rotchell, technical manager at British Lion Films, wrote to the BBFC on 3 May with information about the movie's cast and crew, and full prints were submitted for final BBFC evaluation on Monday 24 May. The film ran to a total of 90 minutes (8,110 feet), and was officially viewed by the censors on 6 July. Although no cuts were requested, by



***At The Earth's Core* remains a novelty curio of a bygone era in filmmaking.**

the time it was released in cinemas, around three and a half minutes of footage seems to have been removed. The final theatrical print was 86 minutes and 27 seconds long, with the longer original cut now lost.

The censor's report said: "As some of the fights between men and monsters could be frightening to some young audiences we gave it an 'A' category without cuts… The special effects are spectacular with sheets of flame, explosions and much falling rock, but lack the conviction that might inspire real terror."

At The Earth's Core was released later that month, with exciting poster art from the prolific Tom Chantrell, who had also worked on *The Land That Time Forgot*. Among the box office competition facing the film was a reissue of 1964's *My Fair Lady* – the same film that had caused Subotsky's last *Dalek* film to lose its top spot at London's Studio One cinema ten years earlier. *At The Earth's Core* won out this time, becoming the 18th most profitable British movie of 1976.

However, In 1977, Rosenberg left Amicus. *At The Earth's Core* was his last film for the studio, which ceased trading by the end of the following June. Amicus's final film (with AIP) was *The People That Time Forgot*, a sequel to *The Land That Time Forgot*. However, by the time it was released, Amicus had already ceased to exist.

As the Seventies neared its end, *At The Earth's Core* was paired off in cinemas on a double-bill with 1965's *Dr Who And The Daleks* – perhaps an acknowledgement of the film's true roots. For all its quirks and mixed heritage, *At The Earth's Core* is probably the closest thing to a third *Doctor Who* film.



At The Earth's Core is out now on DVD.

INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS

How monsters were made

The effects supervisor on *At The Earth's Core* was Ian Wingrove, who worked on the dinosaur effects for both *The Land That Time Forgot* and the 1974 *Doctor Who* story 'Invasion Of The Dinosaurs'.

Wingrove recalls that he had a much "smaller crew than what you would these days. I should think I had a crew of about 10-15 guys on *At The Earth's Core*. On top of that, I was using the studio departments, like the plasterers. But I think if you'd done an equivalent film now, you would probably have around 60-70 special effects men."

The bulk of the dinosaur scenes took a 'man-in-a-suit' Toho-esque approach to monster-making, with latex and fibreglass costumes worn by actors in scaled-down sets, filmed separately and later integrated into the action. The actors would perform in front of large screens, onto which film of the dinosaurs would be projected. The monsters, in reality no more than eight feet tall, would appear over twice that. More complicated were the flying dinosaurs, particularly the Mahars, who needed to swarm around a subterranean cave, occasionally swooping down on natives.

"That was very hard to do," says Wingrove. "Those costumes that they had to wear were a combination of fibreglass and latex, and latex is very heavy… Nowadays, you can use a big rope to hang somebody on, and you can remove it quite easily. Those days, we didn't have that. So we've got guys on wires, and we painted the wires out using some of the techniques we used on *Thunderbirds* years before. It was quite difficult and dangerous, because wires have been known to break, and you're trying to keep them as thin as possible."

"The flying creatures," recalled director Kevin Connor, "would crash into the plaster walls of the set, spin and tumble down, wings flapping in a very ungainly way. The poor stunt guys on all fours in the cramped positions of the monsters could only be in them for a few minutes at a time – then they would roll over, legs in the air, gasping for air."

The miniature work focused on the creation of the Iron Mole. Although the interior was built as a full-sized set, the exterior required the construction of a model, with only a small section built full-scale at Pinewood.

Wingrove again: "The art department had the model built… To mechanically control the nose cone and the back cone, we had to have hydraulic motors, because electric motors would have been too big to get inside. We really needed two or three different scales of model for that thing, we were only presented with one and were told, 'Well, that's all we can afford. You've gotta get on with it.'"

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IT MADE JANE FONDA A HOUSEHOLD NAME AND SET THE BAR FOR SPACE VIXENS EVERYWHERE. BARBARELLA WAS A FLOP WITH THE CRITICS, BUT AFTER A RE-RELEASE IN 1977, IT HAS MANAGED TO STAND THE TEST OF TIME. SCIFINOW LOOKS AT WHAT MADE IT SUCH A CAMPY SPACE CLASSIC...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film

BARBARELLA



Film

RUNNING TIME: 98 minutes
RELEASE DATE: 10 October 1968
DIRECTOR: Roger Vadim
WRITERS: Vittorio Bonicelli, Clement Biddle Wood, Brian Degas, Tudor Gates
CAST: Jane Fonda, John Phillip Law, Anita Pallenberg, Milo O'Shea, Marcel Marceau, David Hemmings

About

The evil inventor Durand Durand has created a death ray that could start an all-out war across the universe, and it's up to astro-navigatrix Barbarella to stop him. Traversing the galaxy in her psychedelic spaceship, she encounters snapping dolls, hunky icemen, evil tyrants and fabulous outfits. Accompanied by the blind angel Pygar, Barbarella heads to Sogo, the City of Night, in search of Durand Durand, having lots of sex in the process. Can they stop the inventor before it's too late? Can they hold off the war that will surely follow his advances? Can Barbarella find the perfect outfit?

Possibly the only film ever made to feature a sexy space striptease during the opening credits, you know where you stand with *Barbarella* before the first line of dialogue: there's going to be lots of sex, lots of space and lots of stripteases.

"Barbarella's psychedelia/there's a kind of cockleshell about you," croons the theme tune guy as Jane Fonda's spacesuit floats around a psychedelic spaceship. Slowly and sexily, as spaceboots, spacesuit and spacehelmet are removed, the actual Jane Fonda is revealed, her modesty protected by the words 'JANE FONDA' hovering in front of her, followed by the rest of the cast and crew.

Now fully naked, Barbarella's alone time is interrupted by a phone call. "Stand by for a message from Dianthus, President of Earth and Rotating Premier of the Sun System," says the videophone.

And Barbarella continues to speak to the President of Earth and Rotating Premier of the Sun System (Claude Dauphin) about the potentially endangered future of the universe with her tatas out.

On the planet of Tau Ceti, evil scientist Durand Durand (Milo O'Shea) has invented a weapon: the Positronic Ray, which could lead to all-out war between the planets in a universe that has been pacified for centuries. It's up to Barbarella to stop him, and thus the plot of the entire film is set in what is probably record time for a space opera.

What makes *Barbarella* so special is that it is consistently terrible. Every scene is unbelievable, but less in a 'that would never happen' way and more in a 'why did that happen? What's the point in any of this? Seriously, Jane Fonda, what were you thinking?' way. It's insane and

"SHE'S FEARLESS AND KNOWS HOW TO BACKCOMB"

ridiculous, but also entertaining, charming and very funny.

There are three things you should know about Barbarella: she's fearless, she knows how to backcomb, and her accident-proneness is astounding. Stumbling around her fur-lined spacecraft, she crash-lands on the icy plains of Tau Ceti and, after escaping the wreckage, is hit in the face by a snowball and immediately knocked unconscious.

The culprits, young twin girls who speak only in gibberish, bind her wrists together, and they all skate away on a sled pulled by a weird land-stingray creature thing. After a lap around the frozen arena set to a mash-up of generic cheesy game show music and *Brazzle Dazzle Day* from Disney musical *Pete's Dragon*, they head to another wreckage, this time Durand Durand's ship. More children lure Barbarella into the shadows, where she is subsequently savaged by creepy snapping dolls with razor teeth. It's all pretty trippy.

Barbarella may be the astro-navigatrix heroine, but around 60 per cent of the film consists of her getting into trouble, and 30 per cent is her getting rescued (the other ten per cent comprises stripteases and costume changes). In the nick of time, in swoops Mark Hand the Catchman (a rugged, fur-clad Ugo Tognazzi), who collects homeless children to use as slaves in the city of Sogo, and they both sail away on his Sail Boat of Fur and Sex.

Barbarella is, of course, extremely grateful, and agrees to have sex with Mark Hand the Catchman in return. She reaches for her 40th Century cerebral sex pills – which she conveniently keeps in a pocket on her belt at all times – but is stopped before she can whip them out.

"I don't care for that," says Mark Hand the Catchman, gesturing to the pills. "This is what I mean... the bed!"

Barbarella is scandalised. "That? But nobody's done that for centuries! It impedes maximum efficiency." Ultimately, however, she doesn't take much convincing.

Leaving the Sail Boat of Fur and Sex in a haze of afterglow and a leotard fashioned from what appears to be a space skunk, Barbarella restarts her hunt for Durand Durand and heads to the city of Sogo.

After another costume change and another crash-landing, Barbarella wakes up – she got knocked out again at some point – in the Labyrinth of the City of Night with a hand on her boob. Attached to the hand is Pygar (John Phillip Law), a blind angel who has lost the will to fly. He's basically Rocky Horror, but with wings and no optic nerves.

"I'm dead," says Barbarella. "No," replies Pygar.

Not being able to fly, Pygar guides Barbarella through the Labyrinth on foot and, in the spirit of *Barbarella*, ends up having to rescue her from the Black Guards, servants to the ruler of Sogo, the Great Tyrant. She is grateful, and so also in the spirit, follows him back to his nest for a roll-around. And lo, after one night with Barbarella, Pygar regained the will to fly. She just has that effect on people.

Together, they fly to the city of Sogo, which is completely powered by Mathmos, a liquid essence of evil – technically a really environmentally and economically friendly

***Barbarella* made a Sixties icon out of star Jane Fonda.**







CLASSIC QUOTES

"AN ANGEL DOESN'T MAKE LOVE. AN ANGEL IS LOVE"
PYGAR

"HELLO. PRETTY-PRETTY"
THE GREAT TYRANT

"MY NAME ISN'T PRETTY-PRETTY; IT'S BARBARELLA"
BARBARELLA

"AND OUR PASSWORD WILL BE… LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGO-GERYCHWYRNDROBW-LLLLANTYSILIOGOGOGOCH"
DILDANO

"I'LL DO THINGS TO YOU THAT ARE BEYOND ALL KNOWN PHILOSOPHIES! WAIT UNTIL I GET MY DEVICES!"
DURAND DURAND

"WHAT'S THAT SCREAMING? A GOOD MANY DRAMATIC SITUATIONS BEGIN WITH SCREAMING…"
BARBARELLA

"DE-CRUCIFY HIM OR I'LL MELT YOUR FACE!"
BARBARELLA

"STAND BY FOR A MESSAGE FROM DIANTHUS, PRESIDENT OF EARTH AND ROTATING PREMIER OF THE SUN SYSTEM"
VIDEOPHONE

"A LIFE WITHOUT CAUSE IS A LIFE WITHOUT EFFECT"
DILDANO

"I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU. YOU'LL WISH YOU HAD DIED OF PLEASURE"
DURAND DURAND

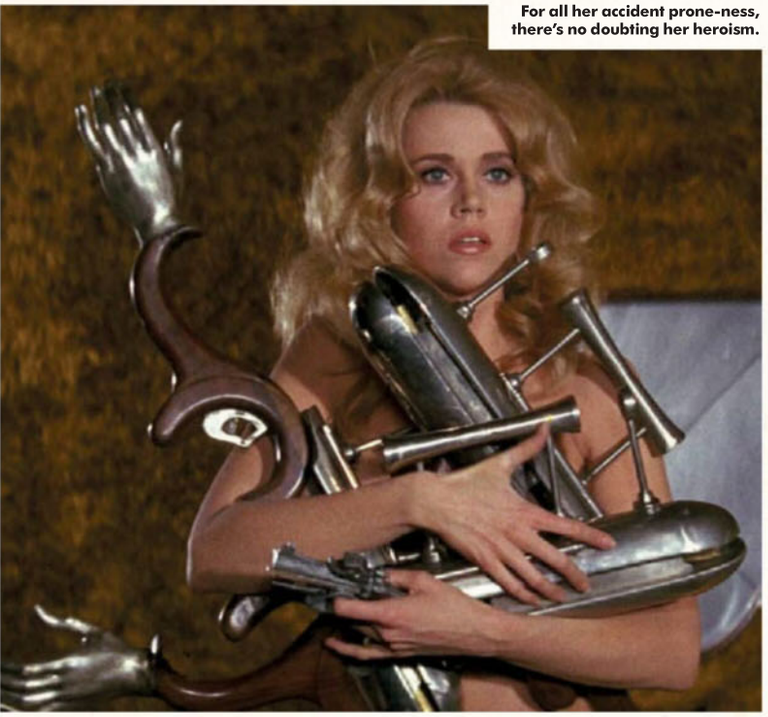
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Anita Pallenberg takes on adversarial duties as the Great Tyrant.



Mark Hand the Catchman – the first of Barbarella's conquests.



For all her accident prone-ness, there's no doubting her heroism.

way of doing things when you think about it, but it does raise some issues concerning morality. Its inhabitants are all evil and sex-crazed, and the good eggs among them are exiled to the Labyrinth.

Barbarella and Pygar are quickly captured by the Concierge to the Great Tyrant. Everything goes tits up from there, with Pygar crucified, de-crucified and left as the Tyrant's new plaything and Barbarella locked in a cage to be savaged by birds.

"Oh, how darling!" she says, charmed at first, until she's bleeding and most of her clothes are ripped off. "This is really a much too poetic way to die."

Suddenly, a trapdoor appears, and Barbarella falls down a slide and into a cross between an operations control centre and a sex dungeon. From the shadows comes her rescuer Dildano (David Hemmings), a leather-clad, mustachioed space Robin Hood. Barbarella offers to repay him for his kindness, and heads to the bed before he can suggest such a thing.

But Dildano doesn't want the bed; Dildano wants to try some Earth loving. He already has the pills. And so ensues one of the weirdest and least sexy sex scenes ever made. Palms pressed together, it's all a blur of curling hair, smoking hands, electric guitars and leather until both are finally satisfied.

Now down to business. Dildano happens to be the head of the revolutionary forces whose aim is to bring down the Great Tyrant once and for all. Unfortunately, the revolutionary forces lack the funding or competence to force revolution, so their efforts have been futile.

As per norm, Barbarella offers to help out where she can. After a quick costume change, she and Dildano devise a plan

"WE SHOULD ALL ASPIRE TO BE A BIT MORE LIKE BARBARELLA"

WHAT NOT TO WEAR

Five of the weirdest costumes to hit the screen in sci-fi

1 EFFIE TRINKET
THE HUNGER GAMES (2012 TO PRESENT)



Even when a nation threatens to collapse into violence and chaos thanks to the greatest armed civilian uprising that its society has ever seen, the world is your catwalk, and you treat it as such.

2 KEEPER
ÆON FLUX (2005)



The late Pete Postlethwaite appeared alongside Charlize Theron in the futuristic sci-fi action film as a human burrito. He's a great actor, but it's fair to say that this wasn't his finest hour. Then again, was it anyone's?

3 MING THE MERCILESS
FLASH GORDON (1980)



Max von Sydow stole the show as Ming the Merciless, with his sculpted eyebrows, couture blood orange and gold gown and matching high-rise collar. You work it, Ming.

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to overthrow the Great Tyrant. In a wonderful bit of mime acting, Barbarella gets given an invisible key to open the invisible wall of the Tyrant's Chamber of Dreams (ie: her bedroom). She ventures off into the city on her own, and is quickly captured by the Concierge.

Into the Excessive Machine she goes, a giant sex organ that plays classical music and creates agonising pleasure. Barbarella's clothes shoot off, blah blah blah, and she is subjected to the greatest torture known to Sogo.

"Oh! It's… sort of nice, isn't it?" she muses. "When it reaches the crescendo you will die… of pleasure," responds Durand Durand.

The tempo increases, and Barbarella really gets into it. In a delightful get-out clause, the Excessive Machine can't keep up with her libido, and is reduced to a pile of smoking metal. It takes a lot more than pleasure to bring down an astro-navigatrix sexplorer.

The Concierge is surprised and quite frankly appalled, and in the ensuing chaos, accidentally reveals that *he is the real Durand Durand.* Gasp. The Mathmos caused him to age 30 years, making him unrecognisable.

Then it all kicks off: Durand Durand pulls a dick-move, traps Barbarella and the Great Tyrant and tries to crown himself Lord of Sogo. Dildano finally gets round to launching his revolution, but his rebels get slapped down by the Positronic Ray. Barbarella and the GT are protected from the Mathmos by Barbarella's innate goodness, and Pygar flies them to safety to the funky beat of *An Angel Is Love* by The Bob Crewe Generation.

Though not the perfect poster woman for modern feminism, Barbarella is something else. She's not the brightest death ray in the toolbox, but she's fearless and adventurous, and treats the threat of galaxy-wide destruction like a walk in the park. We should all aspire to be a bit more like Barbarella. Perhaps you're already there, just minus the spaceship. We are all astro-navigatrix sexplorers, and we are all fabulous.

RUBY RHOD
THE FIFTH ELEMENT (1997)



4 Leopard print, jumpsuits and quiffs are all so last season, but as Chris Tucker's über-flamboyant Ruby Rhod in *The Fifth Element* had his own radio show, it didn't really matter one bit.

ZED
ZARDOZ (1974)



5 The strain of his too-tight hot pants (seriously, what were they thinking?) is what eventually turned Sean Connery's Zed into a brutal killing machine. Size up, Zed; you'll feel better.



Even torn and bleeding, there's no keeping her down.



Quite a few characters – most notably the angel Pygar – feel the benefit of Barbarella's influence.

WATCH FIRST



PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES (1965)
Disembodied beings stalk the crew of a spaceship when they crash-land on an unfamiliar planet.

WATCH NEXT

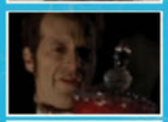


THE FIFTH ELEMENT (1997)
Barbarella inspired Jean-Paul Gaultier's risqué costume designs in Luc Besson's memorable space opera.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC
WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"It's definitely of its time and place – which is basically 'a hippy commune on the way to Woodstock.' Trippy." **@Waynelittlewood**



"It's still funny and campy, Orgasmatron wins." **@TBconfid**



"Rubbish! Never rated it at all. Soft core space bobbins." **@paulbestall**



"Classic tat, and Durand Durand a great baddie." **@JohnHall1977**



"Completely awesome anti-war statement. Also Duran Duran got their name from there." **@QofTU**



"A bit dated really. One of the few films probably due for a remake." **@TheCrowLady**



"Love it. Definitely of its time, but enormous fun. Weird and wonderful." **@HippyDave**

THE SCIFINOW LOST QUIZ

OCEANIC FLIGHT 815 CRASH-LANDED TEN YEARS AGO, BUT WHAT CAN YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE ISLAND? DID YOU SEE IT THROUGH TO THE END, OR WERE YOU THE FIRST TO DIE?

WITH A MIGHTY FLASH

1. Where was Hurley committed after his breakdown over a collapsing deck?
2. Whereabouts did Jack get his controversial shoulder tattoos?
3. What subject did Ben teach after leaving the Island in the flash sideways?
4. What was Charlie's band Drive Shaft's greatest hit?
5. Who was the other half of Sawyer's buddy-cop team in the flash sideways?

WELCOME TO THE ISLAND

6. What creature did Sawyer shoot in the first week on the Island?
7. Where did both Ben and Locke end up after turning the frozen donkey wheel?
8. What is the official name given to Desmond's hatch by The DHARMA Initiative?
9. What is the name of the second, smaller island?
10. What is The Black Rock?

WHO SAID WHAT?

11. "What the sodding hell is a sweat lodge?"
12. "Maybe you should read the machine its rights."
13. "Everything's going to change. Have a cluckity cluck-cluck day, Hugo."
14. "Crazy people don't know they're going crazy. They think they're getting saner."
15. "We have two big hamsters running around in this giant wheel in our secret underground lair."

CELEBRITY LOVE ISLAND

16. Where did Locke first meet his girlfriend Helen Norwood?
17. Claire refused to move to the caves unless Charlie found her what?
18. What is Sawyer's pet name for Juliet?
19. What did Jack ask Kate to do for him when they first met after the crash?
20. What song does Shannon sing to Sayid by the campfire after translating Rousseau's notes?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

JOHN LOCKE

You not only survive on the Island; you thrive. Though you may have a hard time getting others to see your point of view, you would do anything to protect your home and achieve your destiny.

11-15

BEN LINUS

You know the Island possibly better than anyone, but can sometimes be a bit of a dick about it. You'd commit mass murder to get what you want but that tends to drive people away.

6-10

JACK SHEPHARD

You are haunted by ghosts of your past, with scores to settle and inner demons to slay. Ultimately, you can never escape your destiny, and you often find yourself back where you started.

0-5

KATE AUSTEN

You like to make the most of a bad situation, but things never work out as planned. You try to run from your problems, but they keep catching up. Things will get better eventually, but for now you're a lost cause.

ANSWERS: 1. SANTA ROSA MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE **2.** THAILAND **3.** EUROPEAN HISTORY **4.** 'YOU ALL EVERYBODY' **5.** MILES STRAUME **6.** A POLAR BEAR **7.** TUNISIA **8.** THE SWAN STATION **9.** HYDRA ISLAND **10.** A SHIPWRECKED TRADING SHIP **11.** CHARLIE PACE **12.** JULIET BURKE **13.** JIN-SOO KWON (IN HURLEY'S DREAM) **14.** JOHN LOCKE **15.** BEN LINUS **16.** AT AN ANGER-MANAGEMENT SUPPORT GROUP **17.** A JAR OF PEANUT BUTTER **18.** BLONDIE **19.** SEW UP A WOUND ON HIS BACK **20.** 'LA MER'

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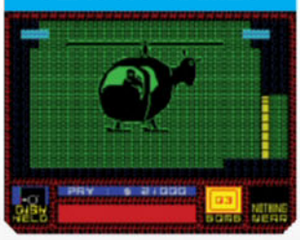
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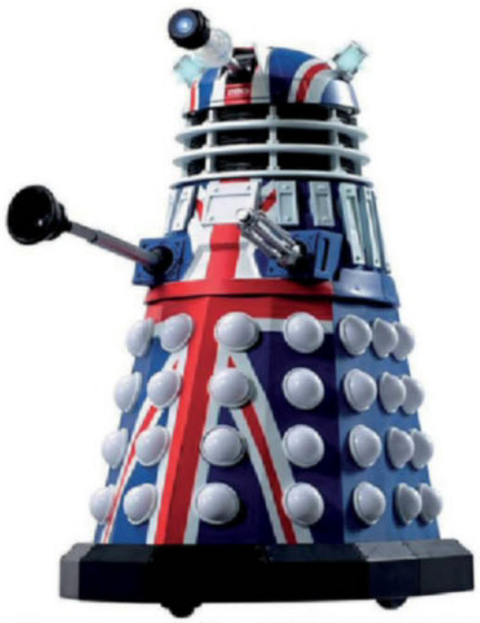
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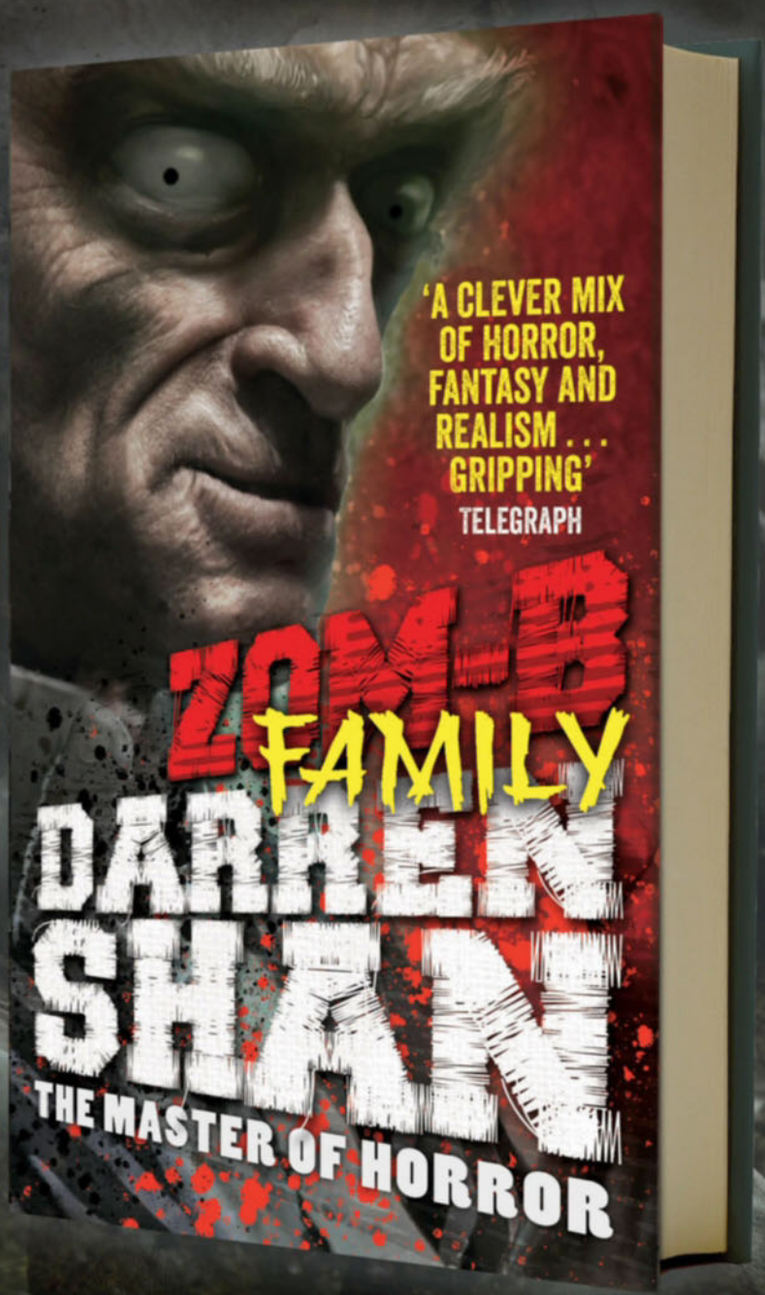
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